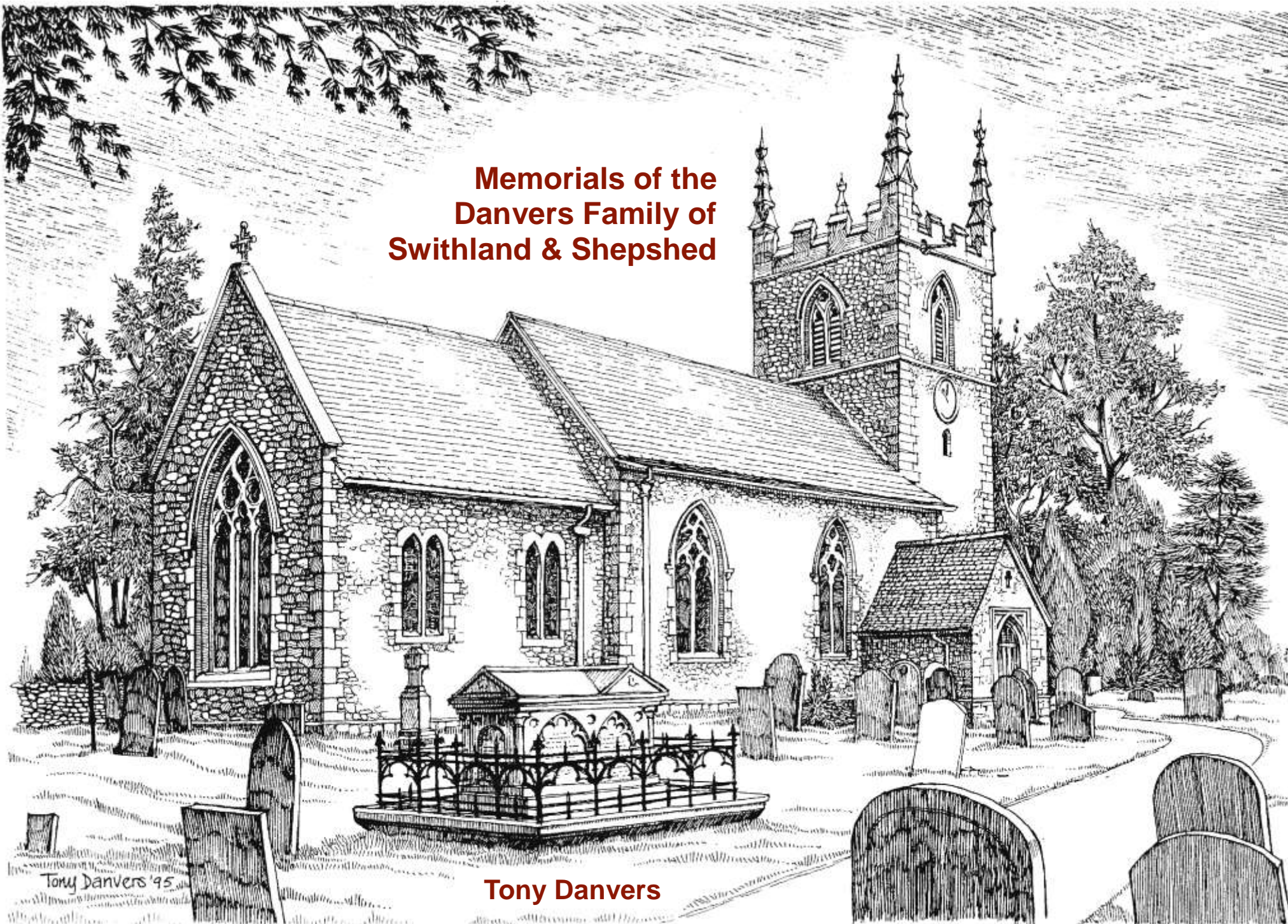


**Memorials of the
Danvers Family of
Swithland & Shepshed**



Tony Danvers

Front cover: A pen & ink drawing of Swithland Church by Tony Danvers

**Memorials of the Danvers Family
of Swithland & Shepshed**

Written and Presented by Tony Danvers, NDD, ATD.

Based on Research by Judith Watts and Pat Davies

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Front Cover: St. Leonard's Church, Swithland, Leicestershire.

Back Cover: The Wedding of John Danvers and Annie Lester on the 24th of May 1904

The Author would also like to extend his grateful thanks to his wife Carol, to Mike Ratcliff, and to Jess Jenkins, an archivist at the Leicestershire Record Office, for their diligence and patience in reading and correcting my many mistakes.

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PREFACE

It would be wrong to begin this history of the Danvers family of Swithland and Shepshed without referring to Dr. F. N. Macnamara's book entitled "The Memorials of the Danvers Family" published in 1895, which was very helpful in our researches, and to the Centennial edition of this same book published by Gary Danvers and Jane Webster in 1995.

In 1852 Dr. Francis Macnamara, a Surgeon Major with the Indian Army married Amy Danvers the third daughter of Frederick Dawes Danvers. The doctor having time to spare upon retiring in about 1888 and having a fondness for antiquarian research set about proving or disproving the correctness of a chart setting out the table of descent of the Danvers family which he had found. In the preface to his book he wrote that this chart traced the ancestry of the family, through the Swithland branch, to the time of the Conquest. However the only evidence he could discover of his family's connection to the Swithland Danvers family rested in some letters of the last Baronet of Swithland to John Danvers of Hornsey, in which he spoke of the latter as "a relative and friend"

Interestingly although Dr. Macnamara was prompted to research the Danvers family through finding the Swithland chart, in the final edition of his superbly researched book we find that the Danvers family of Swithland barely warrants a mention and then only as a footnote at the end of his book. This might be due to the fact that Macnamara believed that the lineage of the Danvers family of Frolesworth died out in the senior male line and the Frolesworth estates passed with the marriage of Joan Danvers to Sir John de Aumari.

Macnamara therefore surmised for three very good reasons, which we will discuss later in this book, that the Swithland Branch may have stemmed from a John Danvers, the third son of John Danvers and Alice Verney, who married Margaret Walcote of Swithland. In doing so he appears not to have given credence to Nichols' version of the ancestry of the Swithland branch of the Danvers family which Nichols suggested stemmed from the Frolesworth family to Shackerstone thence to Swithland. The researchers of this book could not say with any certainty which chart provided the stimulus for Macnamara's research but it is not beyond the bounds of probability that it could have been the table of descent produced by the visitation of 1619 that was printed in Nichols' book, with which Macnamara was familiar and referred to in his notes.

For those readers unfamiliar with the term visitation the following may help.

Visitations were tours of inspection made by heralds in England to survey and keep a record of the coats of arms and pedigrees of those using coats of arms and to correct irregularities. Visitations took place between the years 1530 and 1686 at intervals of about thirty years. It was the duty of the Kings of Arms to survey and record the bearings and descent of those persons bearing coats of arms in their provinces and to correct those arms irregularly used. Occasionally in the 15th century, and more regularly in the following two centuries, these heralds made periodical circuits of various parts of the country, under the authority of Royal Commissions, to inquire into all matters connected with the bearing of arms, to correct coats of arms unlawfully borne or usurped, to collect information, and to draw up authoritative records. There is evidence that some local visitations took place in the 15th century, but from 1530 they were held at intervals of about thirty years.

This table of descent based on the visitation of 1619 is shown on the next page and is taken directly from Nichols' book "The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicestershire" published between the years 1794 and 1805. It would be very easy to assume that this pedigree would provide the perfect start for any research into the history of the Danvers family for a genealogist and to a certain degree this is true but visitations are known to be prone to inaccuracy and Macnamara himself gave three reasons why he felt this tree was incorrect.

Judith Watts and Pat Davies, the two researchers of this book, decided to try to resolve this conflicting problem of where the Swithland and Shepshed Danvers families originated from and, in a similar way to Macnamara, to prove or disprove the accuracy of this family tree. Over the past 30 years they have amassed a very large amount of material relating to the Danvers families of Swithland and Shepshed, together with their close and distant relatives. However it is not our intention to burden our reader with having to wade through a huge amount of detailed information. Rather, we have tried to put flesh on the bones of those Danvers whose lives and characters we consider are more than worthy of special attention as well as closely examining the facts, as we see them, surrounding the Danvers ancestry.

We begin this story with the thorny issue of the ancestry of the John Danvers who married Margaret Walcote, the daughter and coheir of John Walcote; thereby bringing the Swithland estates into the Danvers family. In stating this we immediately differ from the tree in Nichols' book.

PEDIGREE of D'ANVERS, DE AUMARI, WOLFE, and WALSHALL.

(From the Visitation of Leicestershire, by Samson Lennard, Bluemantle, and Augustine Vincent, Rouge dragon, Pursuivants of Arms, 1619, in the Library of New College, Oxford.)

Hugh D'Anvers (descended from Norman Alvase, a Brabanter, a companion of William the Conqueror in 1066, who married a daughter of Torold, son of Jeffery the Saxon) lord of Frolesworth, temp. Hen. I. = Felicia, daughter of Thomas Sachevile, of Frolesworth².

Bertram Danvers, of Frolesworth. = Alice, relict of Robert de Burton.

Stephen D'Anvers, of Frolesworth, 1259. = daughter of Hugh de Brandeston.

1. Robert D'Anvers, of Frolesworth, 1278. = Alice, daughter of Nicholas de Howton¹.

2. Henry D'Anvers, of Frolesworth, 1279, 1288. =

1. Nicholas D'Anvers, of Frolesworth, married 1321. = Isabella, daughter of sir Robert Burdet, knt.

2. Robert D'Anvers, = of Shakerston, 1279. =

1. Joan, dau. and heir; first wife; died 1339. = Sir John de Aumari, of Little Malden, Essex, lord of Frolesworth in right of his wife; d. 1341. = Eleanor ; 2d wife; re-married, 1376, to J. Bakepuiz.

William D'Anvers, of Shakerston, son of Henry D'Anvers of Frolesworth, born 1313. =

Henry D'Anvers. =

John D'Anvers, born 1356. =

John D'Anvers, born 1393. =

John D'Anvers, born 1452; of Swithland in right of his wife. = Margaret, daughter and coheir of sir William Walcote, of Walcote, by the daughter and heiress of sir John Walleis, of Swithland¹.

John D'Anvers. = Thomas D'Anvers, of Swithland, 1485. = Alice, daughter of Venables, baron of Kinderton; a widow 1505.

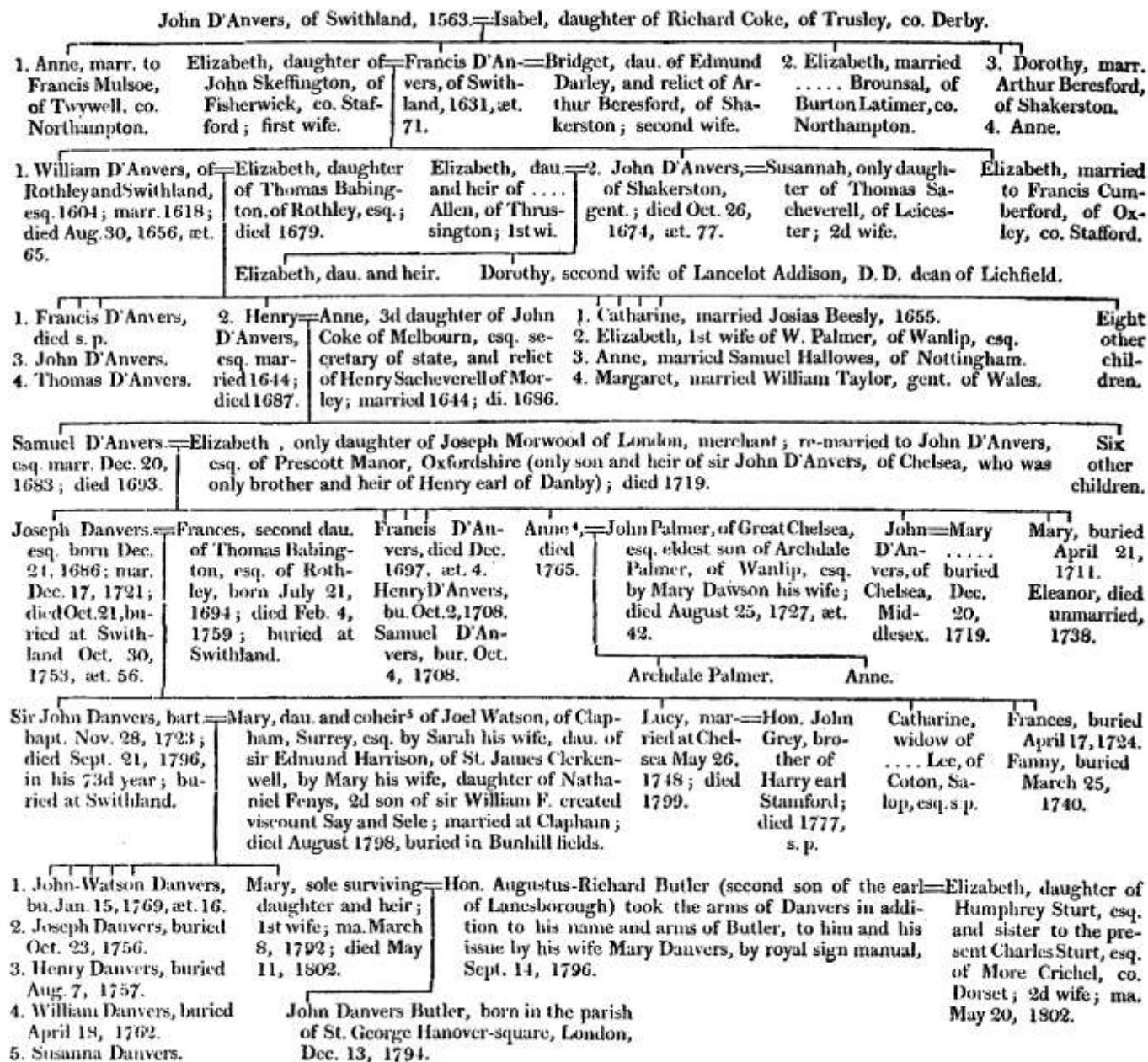
Joyce, married first to William Kendal, and 2dly to John Barfoot.

John D'Anvers, 1487. = Margaret, daughter of sir Ralph Shirley, of Staunton Harold.

Francis D'Anvers. = Margaret, daughter of George Kingston, of Rothley, esq.

John D'Anvers, of Swithland, 1563 = Isabel, daughter of Richard Coke, of Trusley, co. Derby.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Origins of the Swithland Danvers

It has to be said at the outset that to trace the origins of the Danvers family of Swithland is not as straight forward as one would wish. Indeed as we have previously stated Macnamara believed that the John Danvers who married Margaret Walcote was the third son of John Danvers and Alice Verney and he puts forward the following three considerations to support his view and here we quote from his book:

1. *The assumed assent of John Danvers who married Margaret Walcote from Stephen Danvers of Frolesworth, as given by Nichols and others, is moreover, traced to Stephen's second son, Henry who was a cleric, and for many years Rector of Frolesworth. But it is probable that the family of Stephen terminated with his grandson, Nicholas whose daughter and heiress, Joan, 'heir general of the family,' married John Aumari.*

2. *The Visitation of Leicester of 1619 and Phillpotts' 'Leicester and Warwick' say that John Danvers husband of Margaret Walcote was brother to Sir Robert Danvers the Judge, who as we know was the son of John Danvers of Calthorpe, by his first wife.*

3. *The arms of the Danvers of Swithland, given in the Leicester Visitations of 1563 and 1619 are those of John Danvers of Calthorpe and his first wife, Alice Verney, and those arms can only have come to the Danvers of Swithland through John's son John. Not earlier, the dates forbid that; not later for the pedigree of the Danvers of Swithland after the time is authentic and complete, and nowhere admits the introduction of those arms.*

These arguments are very persuasive and are in fact not easy to disprove, particularly the statement regarding the coat of arms. Fortunately for us since Macnamara published his book at the end of the last century further research has been done on this subject. In his book entitled, "Leicestershire Medieval Pedigrees" which G. F. Farnham published privately in 1925, he gives the pedigrees of the Danvers of Frolesworth, Shackerstone and Swithland. He also produced extracts from many documents in which the names of these families were mentioned. In 1957 a Mr. E. J. Danvers took it upon himself to check the accuracy of Macnamara's research regarding the Danvers family, in particular the Swithland branch, and found references to the Frolesworth branch in the Rotuli of Robert Grosseteste of the Episcopacy of Lincoln. He was also indebted to Mr. Ernest Morris F.R. Hist. Soc. for producing further

documentary evidence of the existence of various members of the Danvers family at Shackerstone. If we are to resolve the problem of where this John Danvers originated we have to start with the documentary evidence we have so far managed to uncover and try to find evidence that the Danvers family didn't die out with Joan Danvers as suggested by Macnamara. It seems sensible to begin with the visitation of 1619, and also with the inscription on the plate next to the tomb of Sir John Danvers in Swithland church, which states that a Hugh D'Anvers married Felicia, who was the daughter and heir of Thomas Sacheville of Frolesworth, in the time of King Henry I (1100-1136). So we must go first to Frolesworth to begin to trace our Danvers ancestors.

CHAPTER TWO

Frolesworth 1189 - 1324

To begin our researches into the Danvers family at Frolesworth we can do no better than quote directly from Nichols' book, the History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, volume VI part 1 page 180, as it gives us the names of the earliest Danvers to have resided in the county:-

"Antiently written Frelesworde, Frelleswode, and Frowlesworth, "standeth" says Mr. Burton, "somewhat elevated upon a rising mount." It is 11 miles from Leicester, 5 from Lutterworth, and 5 from Hinckley; bounded on the North by Broughton Astley; on the East by Leire; on the Southeast by Little Ashby; on the South by Cleybrook; on the West by Sharnford; and on the Southwest by Sapcote. In the ecclesiastical division of the county it is within the deanry of Guthlaxton. Six ploughlands in Frollesworde, which in the time of king Edward had been held by earl Waltheof and Sbern a free-man, were at the general survey the property of the countess Judith, and were then worth forty shillings. Six ploughs had been employed there in the reign of the Confessor. At the survey, fourteen socmen had five ploughs, and eight acres of meadow. Half a ploughland there, which was valued at two shillings, was held in the reign of the Confessor by Saxi, who might go whithersoever he pleased.

At the general survey it was worth five shillings, and held by the earl of Mellent. There was half a ploughland, and two socmen had there half a plough. Another half ploughland in Frelesworde, which in the reign of the Confessor had been valued at twelve pence, and was then held freely by Awin, was worth two shillings at the general survey, and held by Robert de

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Ruci. The land was equal to half a plough; and there was one bordar. One ploughland also in Sapcote, worth five shillings, belonged to Frelesworde; the land of which was equal to half a plough; and there were three bordars."

In his book, Nichols mentions that very soon after the Conquest, the lordship of Frolesworth appears to have been in the possession of Thomas de Sacheville, a Norman; and at the same period the families of Danvers and Harcourt were also considerable landholders. Nichols then goes on to say that the first mention of a Danvers in Frolesworth comes in a manuscript in which Thomas de Sacheville gave land to Hugh Danvers in this manner: "May all men know that I Thomas de Sacheville have given to Hugh Danvers and his heirs one virgate of land in Frolesworth to be held of me and my heirs freely and honorably." Then a few paragraphs later Nichols mentions the following: *By Felicia, the daughter of this Thomas de Sacheville, the lordship passed in marriage to Hugo de Anvers, who possessed it in the reign of king Henry I (1100 - 1135) "Let it be known to both present and future men that I Hugh de Anvers and Felicia my wife have given to the church of Frolesworth, with witnesses; Hugh de Chaucombe, William de Senevill."* George Farnham disagrees with this date and says that Hugh and Felicia were probably married in the reign of king Henry II, that is before the year 1189. The presence of Hugh Danvers in Frolesworth at about this time is also confirmed by Richard Basset's Charter to St. John's Hospital taken from the Records of the Borough of Leicester circa 1200.

Richard Basset to all his friends and his men French and English present and to come greeting. Know ye that I have granted and by this my present charter have confirmed to God and to the Blessed Mary and to St. John and to the brethren of the Hospital of St. John of Leicester serving God there, for the health of my soul and of the souls of my heirs and my ancestors, that gift which Geoffrey Biundel of Cosby gave and granted to God and St. John and the aforesaid brethren, by the consent and assent of his heirs and the consent and assent and confirmation of his lord Hugh Danvers and his heirs, together with his body, when he gave himself to God there and entered into brotherhood with the aforesaid brethren, namely one virgate of land in Cosby of my fee with all its appurtenances within and without. Another mention of Hugh Danvers comes from the Curia Regis Roll dated 1199: *The Jury between the King and the Earl of Leicester touching land in Kaudewell (Caldwell near Melton) is respited till the morrow of the close of Easter for default of the recognitors viz Hugh de Anvers and other who did not come.*

These documents, referring to Hugh Danvers, are conclusive evidence of

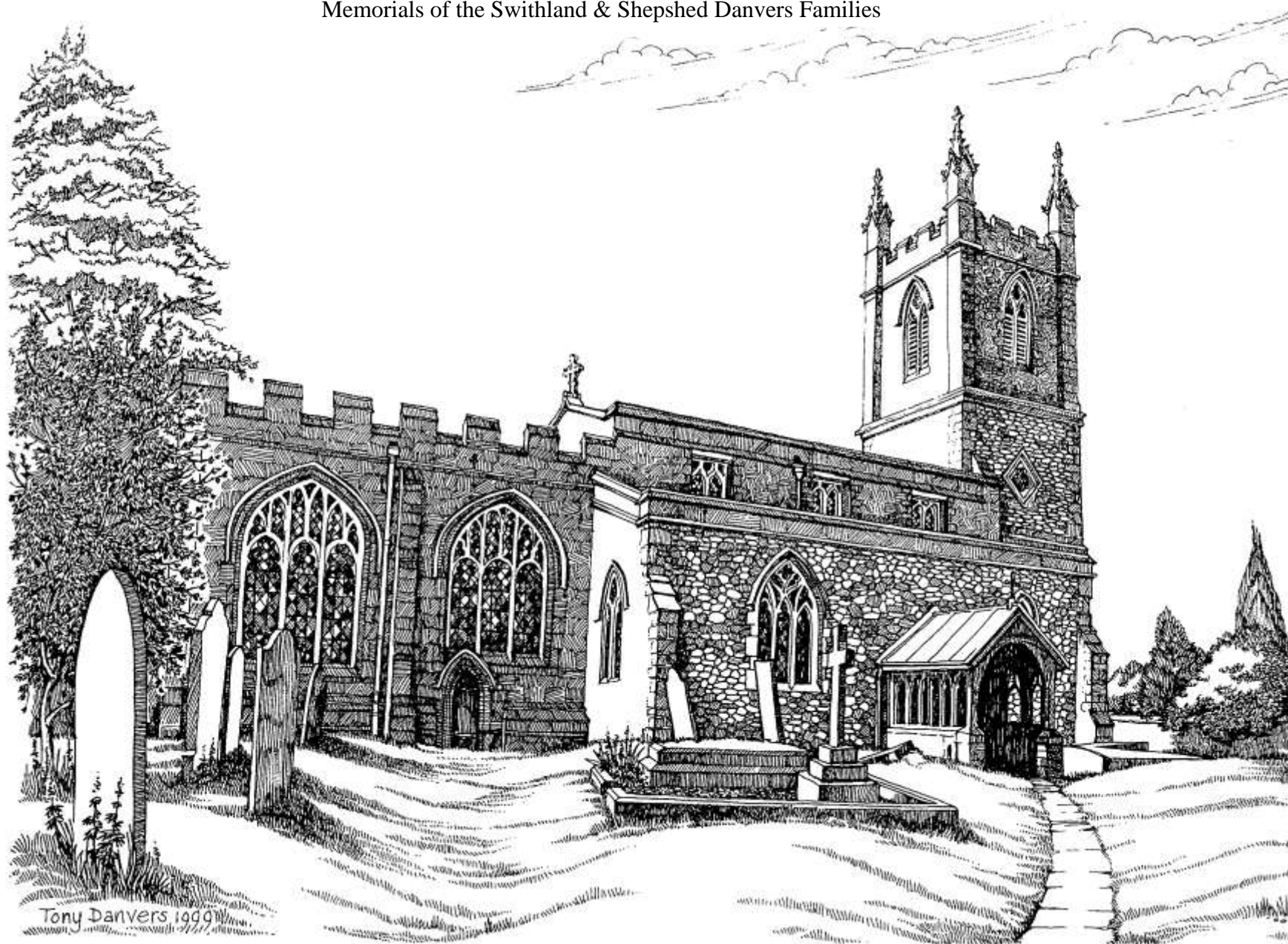
his existence in Frolesworth prior to 1189 until his death sometime before 1211, evidence of which we will see in the following document. Therefore having established beyond reasonable doubt that Hugh Danvers was indeed the originator of the family in Leicestershire we can now begin to look for documentary evidence of his descendants.

The name of one of Hugh's sons a Richard Danvers appears in a Curia Regis Roll dated 1211: *Richard, son of Hugh and Felicia, demands against Ivo De Branteston, a third part of 11 virgates of land in Cosby, dower of Felicia endowed to her by Hugh, her husband. This land is not held by Ivo, as the hospital of Leicester holds 4 virgates in free alms. Richard also demands against Hawise, daughter of Ivo, one messuage in Cosby endowed to her by her former husband Bertrum. Hawise confirmed that Felicia was so endowed, but that she mortgaged the messuage to Bertrum, Hawise's husband, for 12 years, still ongoing, and claims nothing except that term. Richard and Felicia confirmed the messuage was mortgaged to Bertrum but not to his heirs.* This confirms that Hugh de Anvers was dead by 1211.

An interesting fact about Felicia comes from the next document, the Curia Regis Roll 58 dated 1213, which states that *Robert De Barton and Hawise (his wife) demand against Felicia land and property in Frolesworth as the dower of Hawise which Bertrum, her husband, had endowed her. Thomas de Sacheville owned the land before his death and Felicia was his daughter and heir. Bertrum had endowed Hawise, his wife, but Thomas de Sachevill had died 6 months after Bertrum, making Felicia entitled and not Hawise. The dispute was adjourned.*

Therefore, Bertrum Danvers was dead by 1213. In her defence Felicia mentions that the property in Frolesworth to which she had succeeded on her father's death had been in the possession of her ancestors from "the conquest of England". If we suppose this hereditary descent was in the male line then the family of Sacheville must be reckoned amongst the earliest sub-tenants in the County of Leicester whose names have come down to us.

Later in a document dated 1224 we find: *Reginald Marshale to William de Anvers, a messuage and half a yard land, for the term of eight years; Stephen de Anvers, lord of Frolesworth and son of Hugh, was a witness. to the deed. This would imply that Stephen was the son of Hugh but once again George Farnham disagrees. He mentions that Bertram D'Anvers who died in 1213, married Hawise daughter of Ivo de Braunston. Farnham then names Stephen D'Anvers as the son of Bertram quoting the Close Roll of 1235 and the Assize Roll of 1250. He goes on to give Ralph D'Anvers as being the*



St Nicholas Church, Frolesworth, Leicestershire.

Very soon after the Norman Conquest, the Lordship of Frolesworth appears to have been in the possession of Thomas de Sacheville, a Norman. At the same period the families of Danvers and Harcourt were also considerable landholders. Through Felicia, the daughter of this Thomas de Sacheville, the lordship passed in marriage to Hugo de Anvers. Later, in 1259, Stephen Danvers appears as the Lord of Frolesworth.

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son of Stephen. So here we find the first disagreement with the pedigree in Nichols as this pedigree has Robert as his son. According to Nichols, in 1232 Richard de Harcourt granted a messuage in Frolesworth, which lies next to the church cemetery in the east and 1 pound of cumin, to Stephen Danvers to be held for himself and his heirs; Stephen also occurs as one of the witnesses to Roesia de Verdun's endowment of Gracedieu Abbey. In the same record, Stephen Danvers is said to have held under Robert de Tateshale three parts of a knight's fee in Cosseby, Leyre, and Frolesworth; and Robert held the same under Ralph Basset of Weldon. Stephen Danvers is also mentioned as lord of Frolesworth in 1259.

In an Assize Roll of 1260 the following is recorded:

The assize came to recognise whether Alexander Bacun, son of Adam de Frolesworth, and Stephen de Danvers unjustly disseised (dispossessed) John le Fevere of Sutton of his free tenement in Frolesworth, namely, 3 shillings of rent. The jury say that Alexander sufeoffed the said John in 4 virgates of land in the said vill but not in the said rent and that the said John took from certain tenants of Alexander 12 pence, which the said John rendered to the said Alexander, as they say, therefore Alexander did not disseise the said John of the said rent.

The first mention of Stephen's son Ralph is in a Fine dated 1257.

Between William de Norburgh, plaintiff, and Ralph, the son of Stephen de Aunvers, defendant of 2¹/₂ virgates of land and a toft in Cosseby and Thorp. Whence a plea was summoned between them in the same court, that is to say that William acknowledged the said land and toft to be the right of Ralph. And for this acknowledgment Ralph granted to William the said land and toft, namely, whatever Ralph had in the said vill of the feoffment of Stephen, his father, without any retention, to hold to William for the whole life of Ralph and his heir, so nevertheless that William shall hold from Michaelmas in this year to the end of 15 years next following at a yearly rent of 1d. at Easter, and 6d. on behalf of Ralph and his heir to the castle guard of Rokyngham for all service, suits of court, customs and demands. And after 15 years by a yearly rent of £10 sterling for the remainder of William's life, so nevertheless that William de Cosseby, chaplain, to whom Stephen de Anvers, the father of the said Ralph, granted a toft and land for a term of 3 years, namely, to the feast of St. Michael, 4 3/4 Henry III, 1259, shall hold these tenements till the said term and will answer to the said William de Norburg for the rent of one penny for the said three years, and if it happens that William should die before the end of the said 15 years, the said

tenements shall remain to the heirs and assigns of William, to hold of Ralph and his heirs for the remainder of the term. The reversion to Ralph and his heirs for ever. Three years later in a Curia Regis Roll of 1260, William de Northburg versus Stephen Danvers and Ralph, his son, in a plea that they acquit him of the service which the lord the king and the prior of the hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England exact of him for the free tenement which he holds of them in Thorp and Cosseby, of which the Danvers are the intermediaries and ought to acquit William.

In Nichols' History and Antiquities of Leicestershire regarding Cosby we read that in 1274 Ralph Danvers of Frolesworth gave to Henry Danvers, his brother, all his demesne lands and tenements in the townships of Cosseby and Thorpe juxta Northbarn and also in Wotton, Sprotton and Creton in the County of Northampton so that if by chance the said Henry should happen to befall his fate in death within 12 years of the Festival of the purification of the blessed Mary in the third year of Edward I (1274) the land should revert back to Ralph.

Ralph's brother, Henry Danvers, who became rector of Frolesworth in 1274 is also mentioned in this manner;- *Henry de Branteston, archdeacon of Dorset, uncle of Henry and Ralph Danvers, rector of the church of Frolesworth, 1272.* Then later quoting from Bishop Gravesend's Leicester Roll in the records of the Episcopacy of Lincoln there is mentioned the following "Henry de Auvers subdeacon ordained by the Bishop of Salisbury by letters dismissary from the Bishop of Lincoln presented to the vicarage of Frolesworth on the resignation of master Henry de Branston. Patron Ralph de Auvers. This fact, regarding Henry Danvers following in his uncle's shoes, is further confirmed as follows: *Henry Danvers, rector of the church of Frolesworth, (1275) by the charter of Thomas Priest, son and heir of Dine.* And again in another document: *Henry de Danvers, son of Stephen Danvers, rector of Frolesworth 1288 and 1292.* Finally another document referring to Henry Danvers states he was rector of Frolesworth in some part of the widowhood of Alice Danvers, as appears by a deed of Agnes the daughter of Atheline the nurse of Frolesworth to the said Alice. All these records clearly state that Henry Danvers was the brother of Ralph Danvers and the son of Stephen Danvers as well as being the rector of Frolesworth.

In a charter discovered in Ashby Parva by Hugh Goodacre, Henry Danvers, described as "rector of Frolesworth", granted to his brother William a capital messuage and lands in Ashby Parva, Leire and Bitteswell. This may possibly have been the occasion on which the Ashby Parva branch

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

took up their residence in the village and as Henry Danvers ceased to be rector of Frolesworth in 1296, it must have been before this date.”

Indeed this last statement is confirmed in the De Banco Roll 107 dated 1295 when William Danvers is mentioned, together with his wife Matilda, as follows: *Juliana who was the wife of Robert son of James de Esseby parva versus William de Anvers and Matilda his wife in a plea of a third part of two messuages, three virgates, 3 acres of land and 12 pence rent in Asseby parva which she claims as dower. Juliana recovered her seisin by default.*

Then some 35 years later in a Coram Regis Roll 282 Michaelmas 4 dated 1330 we find his widow, Matilda, involved in a plea of trespass in Ashby Parva against Ralph Basset, together with her sons Roger and John. Further evidence of the Danvers family in Cosby occurs over fifty years later in the De Banco Roll 502 10 Richard II dated 1386 in which we find John Truffles, chevalier, versus Thomas Danvers of Causeway in a plea of 40 shillings.

Returning to Frolesworth we see that Ralph Danvers is also mentioned in a deed dated 1274: *Lea daughter of Regional Marshal, her deed to Ralph Danvers of Frolesworth, witnesses; Hugh de Branteston, Thomas Stapelton, and others.* In the Feudal Aids vol: 3 page 97 dated 1284/5 it was found that the lordship of Frolesworth (save one carucate of land) was held in fee of the honour of Leicester; and that Ralph Danvers held the same, of the earl, and the earl of the king, by the service of a quarter of one knight's fee. Then three or four years later in a De Banco Roll dated 1288 we read; *Alice widow of Ralph demands from Henry Danvers land in Cosby, a gift from Stephen, whose son and heir was Ralph. Henry is without a day. Alice in mercy for false claim.* Which means of course that Ralph Danvers had died prior to 1288.

In 1296 Alice Danvers is mentioned not only as Ralph's widow but also as the wife of Thomas de Leicester as we read in the following document:- John Danvers, clerk in minor orders to the Church at Frolesworth on the death of Henry Danvers. Patron - Thomas de Leicester (probably in right of his wife, Alice, relict of Ralph Danvers) John Danvers ordained Deacon 15th of March 1296 at Brampton and instituted the same date and place.

Alice Danvers is again mentioned in documents related to land in Cosby as shown in the De Banco Roll 78.17 Edward I, 1289: *The sheriff was ordered to cause 12 men, by whom, etc., and who have no affinity with Alice, who was the wife of Ralph Danvers, or with Henry Danvers, to recognise whether Stephen Danvers enfeoffed the said Ralph and Alice in 2 messuages, 5¹/₂ virgates of land and 33 shillings rent in Cosseby, Kereby and Little-*

thorp, which Alice claims as her right, as Alice says; or whether the said Ralph held the said tenements by hereditary descent, of the inheritance of the said Stephen, his father, as Henry Danvers says.

Alice Danvers is also mentioned in an assize Roll of 1301:- In a writ brought by Geoffrey, son of Thomas le Ferere of Cosby, against Alice, relict of Ralph, and against John Danvers, Parson of the church at Frolesworth, concerning tenements in Cosby. Geoffrey does not prosecute. In 1303, Alicia who was the wife of Ralph de Danvers, held one quarter of a knight's fee in Frolesworth of Robert de Tateshale, deceased. Alice also appears in the De Banco Roll 219 dated 1317- *Pleas that Alice relict of Ralph Danvers, took and kept a horse owned by William, son of Simon of Frolesworth. Nicholas and John Danvers attacked Alice. Alice failed to appear.*

Nicholas Danvers is recorded as having held the lordship of Frolesworth in 1286: *Nicolaus Danvers dominus de Frolesworth 1286.* Nicholas is also mentioned in Assize Roll 465. 26 Edward I. 1298. *The assize came to recognise whether Nicholas, son of Ralph Danvers, disseised William Danvers of his free tenement, namely, one messuage in Cosseby. Nicholas came and said that William unjustly brought the assize against him, because the said messuage was of a certain Richard Burdet, who enfeoffed therein a certain Henry Danvers, the uncle of the said Nicholas, whose heir Nicholas is, and that after the death of the said Henry Danvers, he Nicholas entered as heir of Henry, without which that William never was seised as of a free tenement of which he could be disseised. William says that the said Richard Burdet enfeoffed the said Henry Danvers and him, William, conjointly, and that after the death of Henry, he remained in seisin until Nicholas disseised him. The jury say that Richard Burdet enfeoffed Henry in the said messuage, and made no mention of the said William. Therefore Nicholas is without a day, and William takes nothing, by the assize, but is in mercy for a false claim.*

There is a record of Nicholas Danvers having released all his rights to the advowson of Scharneford church to the prior and monks of Kirkeby Monks whilst he was Lord of the Manor of Frolesworth. Another mention of Nicholas is in the De Banco Roll 132 dated 1300 which states the following:

Master Simon of Enderby versus William and Nicholas Danvers of Frolesworth. Simon asks that William and Nicholas hold an agreement concerning 33 shillings in Frolesworth and Sharnford made between William Danvers and Henry Danvers - William and Nicholas did not appear.

The last mention we have of Nicholas is through his widow which appears in the De Banco Roll 287 which is dated 1331- *John Ammory and*

his wife Joan versus Isabel widow of Nicholas. Isabel executrix of Nicholas's will. Plea of 6 charters, which she detains.

The manor of Frolesworth remained in the Danvers family until the year 1324 when Nicholas Lord of Frolesworth died leaving an only daughter Joan 'heir general of the family,' who was the wife of John Aumari, of Little Maldon, in the county of Essex, who became lord of Frolesworth in right of his wife. In the Itinerary of 1280, Frolesworth, Ashby, and Leire, answered collectively as one vill.

It is by using the above references and other similar material which we have come across in our researches that we feel reasonably confident in drawing up the pedigree of the Frolesworth Danvers who descended from Hugh Danvers which is displayed on the next page.

Although the Danvers family may have lost the lordship of Frolesworth there were junior members of the Danvers family also living in Frolesworth and other areas of the county. To continue following in the footsteps of the Swithland Danvers family we must now go to Shackerstone where mention is made of a Ralph Danvers having land there in 1247.

CHAPTER THREE

Shackerstone 1247 - 1383

At Shackerstone we begin, as we did with Frolesworth, with Nichols' description of Shackerstone.

"Antiently called Sacrestone and Shakston, is bounded by Ibstock, Snareston (viz, that part of Snareston which is within the parish of Swebstone, for part of it is in Shakerston), and Norton, on the North; by Barton (viz, that part of Barton which lies within the parishes of Nailston and Bosworth) on the East; Congeston and Gopsal on the South; and by Gopsal and Snareston on the West; and, in the ecclesiastical division of the county, is within the deanry of Sparkenhoe. It is about 8 or 9 miles from Hinckley, and about 17 from Leicester. One ploughland and a half in Sacrestone, which in the time of king Edward had been worth five shillings, continued of the same value at the general survey, when it was held by Robert Despenser. Five villans had one plough; and there were ten acres of meadow. Robert had seisin of one ploughland and a half in this lordship; but Henry de Ferieres claimed it."

To this manor belonged the soc of one plough-land in Snareston, and of another in Oddeston. In the Testa De Nevill, compiled about 1240, Shakerston is not noticed; but in the Assize Roll mentioned in Nichols Part IV page 907 dated 1247:-

The Assize came to acknowledge whether Henry Sarazin erected a dam in Shackerstone to the nuisance of Ralph de Anvers and Joanna, John the son of Robert (de Shepey) and Amecia, his wife. It was considered that the dam be brought down at the expense of Henry Sarazin. It is through this Assize Roll that the Danvers family, namely a Ralph Danvers, is first mentioned as having property in Shackerstone. Also in 1247 Ralph de Anvers and Johanna, John the son of Robert and Amaur his wife, petitioned against Henry Sarazin for land in Shackerstone which Henry disseized Oliver de Sarazin, father of John and Amaur. Henry de Sarazin appeared and said that they were reconciled. Ralph de Anvers gave half a mark for the licence for agreement. And in a follow up to this petition in the Assize Roll 454, 31 Henry III dated 1247 the following legal proceedings occur:- Ralph de Danvers and Joan his wife, John son of Robert [de Shepey] and Amice his wife demand against Henry le Sarazin two parts of a virgate of land in Shakerston, of which the said Henry disseized Oliver de Sarazin, the father of the said Joan and Amice, whose heirs they are. They came and are agreed. The plaintiffs gave a rent and Henry granted to them a virgate of land in Shakerston, to wit, that virgate which Simon de Bereford formerly held for himself and his heirs.

There is however a problem regarding just who this Ralph was and what relationship he had to the Danvers family of Frolesworth. He cannot be the Ralph Danvers who was the son of Stephen Danvers as we already know that he married Alice de Howton. Also he is mentioned in the Pedigree of Waley of Swithland and Danvers of Shackerstone and Swithland as - *Ralph who married Joan Sarazin is Grandson or Great Grandson of Hugh Danvers and started the junior branch of the family at Shackerstone.*

This means that he could be either the brother of Stephen or the son of Richard or William Danvers. There seems to be strong evidence that he was indeed a member of a junior branch of the Frolesworth Danvers family and saw a great opportunity to gain lands and wealth by marrying Joan Sarazin who was the heir, together with her sister Amice, of Oliver Sarazin who as we shall see later wholly held the manor of Shakerstone at that time.

In the De Banco Roll 5 2/3 Edward I dated 1274 we find the first mention of Ralph's son Walter Danvers:- *Walter Danvers versus Robert le Clerk of Shakerston in a plea of a messuage and half a virgate of land in Shakerston which he claims as his right.* Later in 1279 the following inquisition occurs which is quoted in Nichols' book IV page 907 *Shakerston is in the fee of Marmion. John de Shepey and Walter Danvers hold in the same half a*

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants of Hugh Danvers

Hugh Danvers Felicia Sacheville
 Born: Abt. 1165 Married: Bef. 1189
 Died: 1211 in Frolesworth, Died: Af. 1213
 Leicestershire.

Bertrum Danvers Hawise De Braunston Richard Danvers William Danvers
 Born: Bef. 1189 in Married: 1199 Born: Bef. 1211 Born: Bef. 1211
 Frolesworth, Leicestershire = Died: Af. 1213 Died: Af. 1211 Died: Bef. 1272
 Died: 1213 in Frolesworth,
 Leicestershire.

Stephen Danvers De Braunston
 Born: Bef. 1203 in =
 Frolesworth, Leicestershire
 Died: Bef. 1284

Ralph Danvers Alice De Howton Henry Danvers William Danvers Matilda De Sheppey
 Born: Bef. 1236 in Died: Af. 1317 Born: Bef. 1253 in Born: Bef. 1251 in Born: in Shackerstone,
 Frolesworth, Leicestershire = Frolesworth, Leicestershire Shackerstone, Leicestershire
 Died: Abt. 1286 Died: 1296 Died: Bef. 1334 in Ashby Married: Bef. 1295
 Parva, Leicestershire

Nicholas Danvers Isabella Burdett Robert Danvers Matthew Danvers Elizabeth De Thrisk Roger Danvers John Danvers
 Born: Bef. 1286 in Died: Af. 1331 in Born: in Frolesworth, Born: Bef. 1288 in Married: 1317 Died: Af. 1330 Died: Af. 1330
 Frolesworth, Leicestershire = Frolesworth, Leicestershire Leicestershire Frolesworth, Leicestershire = Died: Af. 1317
 Died: Bef. 1324 in Died: Af. 1314 in Died: Af. 1317
 Frolesworth, Leicestershire Shackerstone,
 Leicestershire

John De Aumari Joan Danvers Thomas De Sholton
 Born: in of Little Malden, Born: Abt. 1306 in Married: 1343
 Essex = Frolesworth, Leicestershire =
 Married: Bef. 1325 Died: Af. 1343
 Died: 1341

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

knight's fee by scutage and service of John de Hastings, who is in the King's bondship and this said John of Philip Marmion and Philip of this abbot of Peterborough and the abbot of the King in chief. And they say that the said John and Walter hold in desmene 2 caracutes of land with the advowson of the church. And John has one water mill. And Walter Danvers and the heir of Hodderton hold one water mill in the same village. Item John and Walter hold in villeinage 9½ virgates of land which 10 villeins hold. John and Walter have 11 virgates of land in free tenure, which 7 free tenants hold.

Walter D'Anvers and John de Shepey are also mentioned in the De Banco roll 32, 8 Edward I, 1280 whereby they bring a writ against Edmund Earl of Cornwall and others on a plea of taking cattle; they come ask leave to withdraw their writ. Walter seems rather prone to get himself involved in writs for he is again mentioned in the De Banco Roll 49 Easter 11 Edward I 1283:-

Walter Danvers was summoned to answer Edmund Earl of Cornwall, guardian of the lands and heir of Henry de Hastings, in a plea that he permit him to present a suitable parson to the church of Shakerston, which is vacant and the presentation belongs to Edmund by reason of the lands and heir of Henry de Hastings being in his hand, whence he says that whereas a certain Oliver de Sarazin, who wholly held the Manor of Shakerston, to which the advowson of the said church, temp Henry III, who has admitted and instituted and afterwards the right of the said advowson descended to a certain Joan and Amice, as daughters and heirs of the said Oliver, which said Joan a certain Ralph de Danvers took to wife, from whom was born the said Walter heir of the said Joan, and afterwards the said Joan married a certain William de Norht [Northampton] who after Joan's death, held the property of the said Joan by the law of England, and demured the said property to one Nicholas de Burbache for a term, who, within his term by reason of the said demise, because the said Walter was under age, presented a certain Michael de Norht, his clerk, to the said church, in the time of the new King, who was admitted and instituted by whose death the church is now vacant. And a certain John de Shepey and the said Amice co-partners of the said Joan sufeoffed the said Henry de Hastings, father of the said John now in the wardship of the said Earl, in the property of the said Amice in the said manor and advowson, which property is now in the wardship of the said Earl it pertains therefore to the Earl to present to the said church, but Walter Danvers impedes him by which he says he is damaged £40. And thus he produces suit. Walter came and well acknowledged that the said William

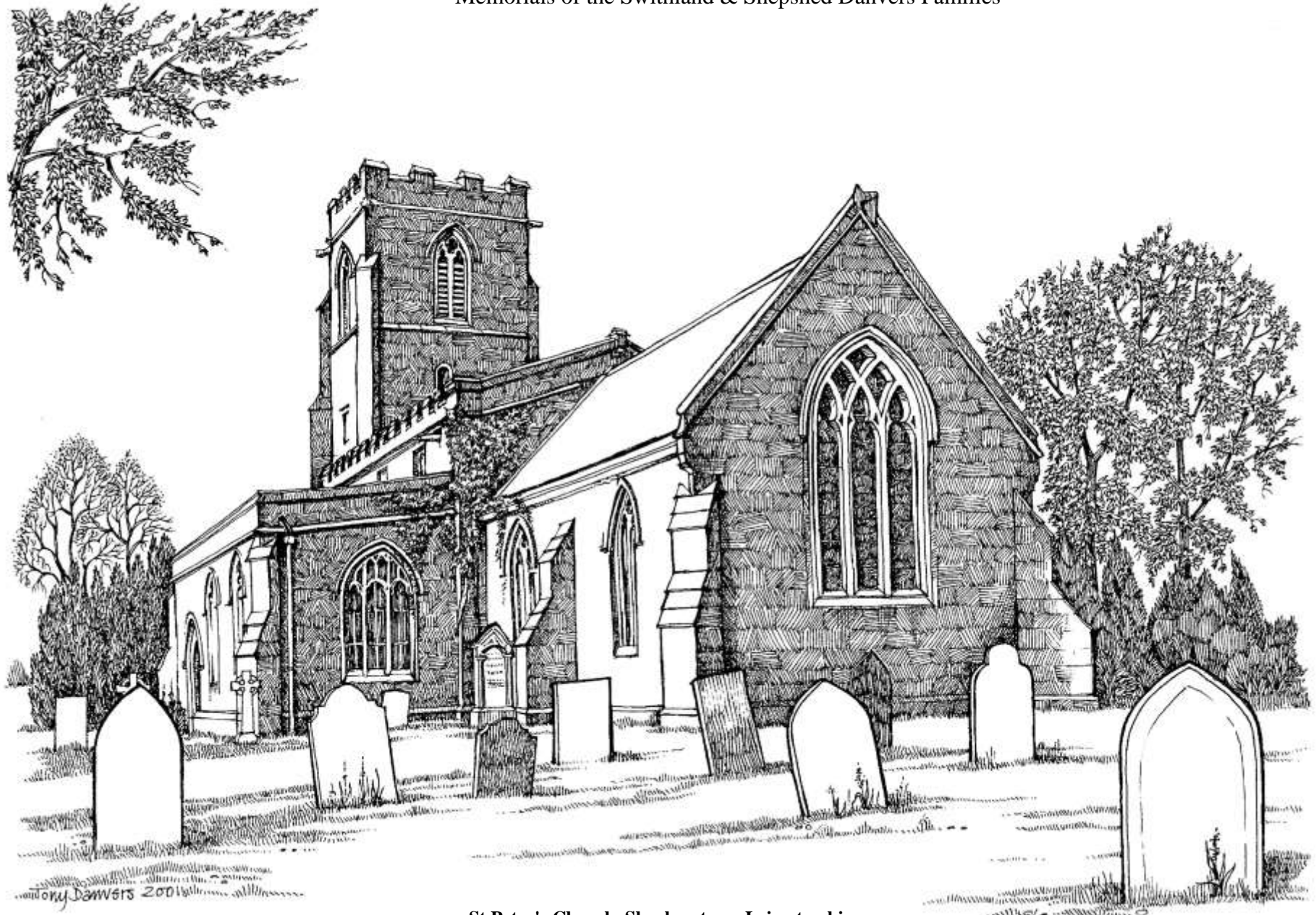
de Norht presented the said Michael to the said church by reason of the property of the said Joan being in William's hand, and agreed that the said Earl, in the name of the said heir, should present for this term to the said church, saving to himself the presentation when next it happens that the said church shall become vacant. Therefore let the Earl have a brief to the Bishop of Lincoln not to obstruct him in presenting a suitable parson to the said church. This document also establishes for us the parents of Walter Danvers. In the itinerary of 1280, Shakerston, Norton, Little Appleby, and Oddeston, answered collectively as one vill. Another mention of Walter Danvers occurs in 1292, upon an inquisition taken after the death of Philip Marmion, it appeared that John Schepeye and Walter Danvers held the manor of Shackerston, together with 11 virgates of land in Snarkeston, 4 virgates in Barton, and 4 virgates in Congeston, of John de Hastings, which John held them of Philip Marmion, as of his honour and Castle of Tamsworth, by the service of half a knight's fee; and they were then worth 20 pounds.

In a De Banco Roll of 1300 Joan who was the wife of Walter Danvers is also mentioned; *Henry le Despenser of Swepston, Elyas de Oddeston and William son of Ralph de Swepston versus Joan in a plea of dower in Shakerston. Joan did not come, and she was plaintiff. Therefore Henry and the others are without a day and Joan and her pledges are in mercy.*

The final mention we have found regarding Walter is dated 1312, it was found that John de Shepey, and Walter D'Anvers held half a knight's fee in Shakerston of John de Hastings senior, deceased; that John de Hastings senior aforesaid had held the advowson of the church of Shakerston aforesaid, worth 15 pounds per annum to the parson; and that John de Hastings junior was the son and heir of the aforesaid John de Hastings, then aged 26.

Next we come to a Fine Mich., 11 Edward II dated 1317. *Between Matthew Danvers and Elisabeth, his wife, and Master John de Thrisk, defendant, of two messuages and 6 acres of meadow in Shakerston. Grant by John to Matthew Danvers and his wife Elisabeth and their heirs, in default to the heirs of Matthew.*

The next Danvers we hear of in Shackerstone is Henry who appears to be quite a character if we are to believe some if not all of the following documents. He is first mentioned in a document M.S.S No 612 which is dated 1328 and it gives us the following information: *Charter by which William de Shepey granted to Sir Bertram de Vorden rector of the church of Bosworth, all his lands and tenements which he had in Shakerston, also the rents and service of the free tenants and villeins with their bodies and all*

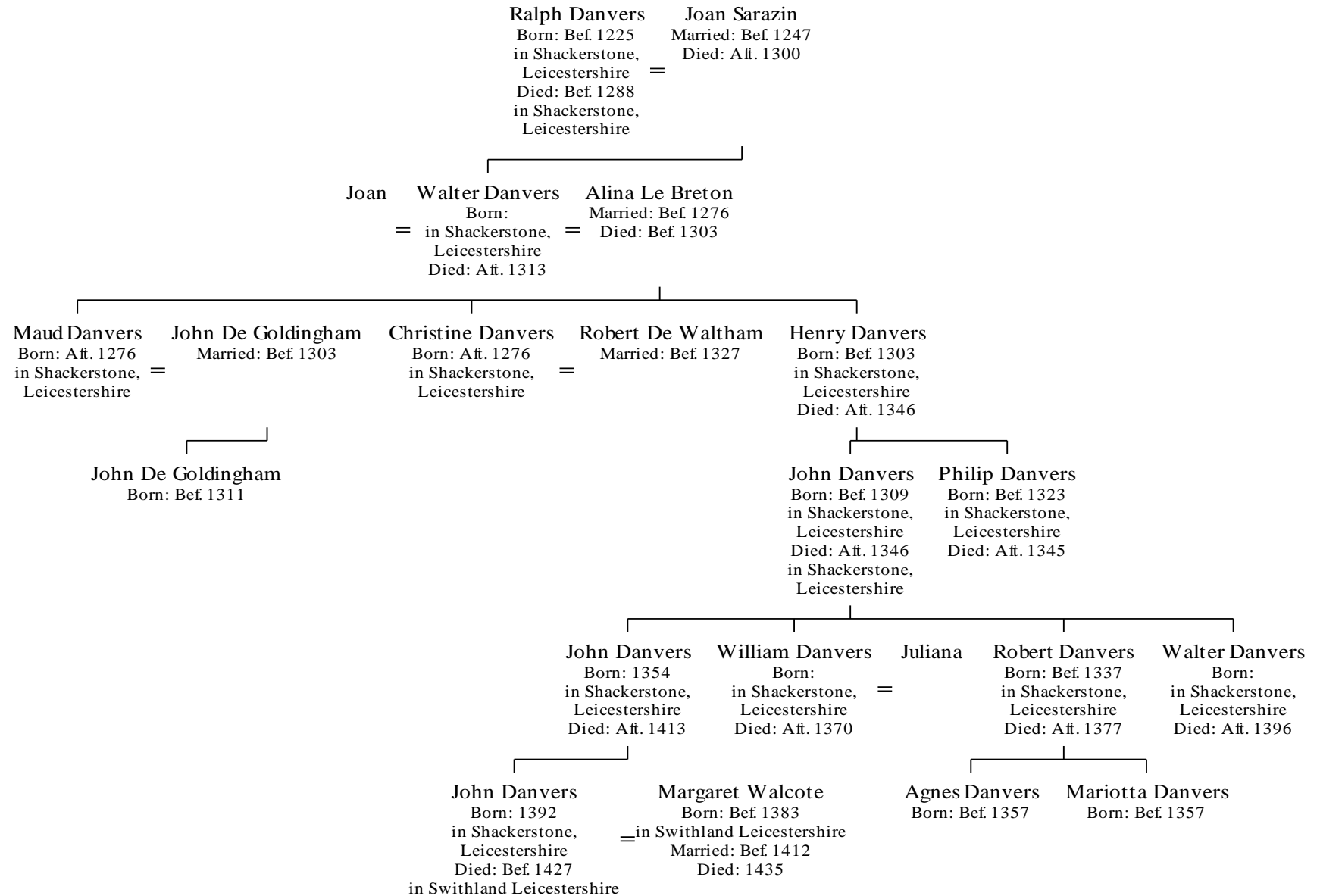


St Peter's Church, Shackerstone, Leicestershire

On a flat stone in the chancel is a memorial to John Danvers who died in 1674. John, the younger son of Francis Danvers of Swithland, married Susannah Sacheverell. According to an inquisition in 1279 Shackerstone was divided between the Danvers and Shepey families who held half a Knight's fee each, equivalent to 320 acres.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants of Ralph Danvers of Shackerstone



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

other appertenances in the same village except two plots of land lying between the plot that William Brown formerly held of the granter in villeinage and the plot of Henry Danvers which Alice Prerles holds of the said Henry at the will of Henry.

These being the witnesses: Sir John de Verdon, John Maunsel, Henry Danvers of Shakerston, John Wyscherd of Osbeston, William son of Ralph de Sutton, John Chaynd the younger and many others. Dated at Shakerston on Thursday after St. Barnabas (18th June) 2 Edward III.

The family of Henry Danvers, as the next two documents show, obviously had a bit of a reputation for taking the law into their own hands, quite literally as the de Banco Roll 278 Trinity 3 Edward III dated 1329 clearly shows:- *Coram rege Roll 278 3 Edward III dated 1329, John Maunsel of Oddeston, John Sylyan, Roger de Tybenham and John son of Henry Danvers of Shakerston and others were attached to answer William de Shepey of Shakerston in a plea of assaulting, beating and wounding the same William at Shakerston on Thursday the vigil of the epiphany, 2 Edward III, 1328, and taking away his goods, to wit golden rings, golden brooches, and linen and woolen cloths to the value of 100 shillings there found. The defendants deny the trespass.*

Henry and his sons appear to have gone even further in their criminal activities according to the next document which is the Coram rege Roll Easter 17 Edward III dated 1343:-

*Alice, who was the wife of Philip Chetwynde, sued Robert son of Ralph de Erematon, John de Rocheford, Henry Danvers of Shakerston and Philip his son and John brother of the same Philip, Henry de Tedderleye and others for forcibly breaking into her home at Shakerston and taking 6 oxens, 12 cows, 6 horses and 40 pigs worth £20. The defendants did not appear. The sheriff was ordered to arrest and produce them. If only we had evidence to show what happened to the defendants. Were they apprehended and punished or were they innocent of their crimes. Past evidence makes this highly improbable. Sadly the last mention we have of this colourful Henry is to be found in Nichols' book IV page 907 Roll of Aids:- *In 1346 Henry Deikins, the heirs of William Wastneys and William Maunsel held the third part of a knight's fee in Shakerston and Oddeston, of the fee of Hastings, and in the same year Henry Danvers, the heir of William Wastell and William Maunsel, on the aid then granted to the King for knighting Edward of Woodstock the King's eldest son, were assessed 13s - 4d for a third part of a knight's fee in Oddeston and Shakerston, parcel of the fee of Hastings.**

The next Danvers we hear of in Shackerstone is Robert, the grandson of Henry Danvers, who is mentioned in the De Banco Roll 417 Easter 38 Edward III (1364):- *Geoffrey Matthew and Felice his wife, William Barfot and Christine his wife and Katherine who was the wife of William Hender-son versus Alice who was the wife of Thomas Shepey of Shakerston in a plea of a charter which she withholds and 3 messuages, a mill, 5 virgates of land, 20 acres of meadow, 8 of pasture, 20s rent and the rent of barrows in Shakerston; and versus Robert Danvers in a plea of a messuage and 3 acres; versus Richard Ellison a messuage and one virgate, versus John Moldersone and Agnes his wife a messuage and half a virgate, versus Robert de Barton a messuage and half a virgate, versus John Blacfordby a messuage and half a virgate, versus William Felde a messuage, 3 acres and a moiety of a virgate, and versus William Cartwright and John his brother a messuage and half a virgate, all in Shakerston, which they demand as the right of Felicia, Christine and Katherine all described as sisters and heirs of Thomas Shepey and the above premises the plaintiffs say had been given by Matthew Danvers to William de Shepey and Christine his wife, and which, after the death of William and Christine and of Thomas their son, to the three sisters of Thomas ought to come as his heirs. Alice who was the wife of Thomas de Shepey had then remarried one Ralph Bourieu of Lichfield, a taverner. Robert Danvers says that he has nothing in the premises except for 3 years by a demise of Thomas de Shepey.*

Robert is again mentioned in a lay Subsidy Roll of 1377 with his wife and daughter Agnes, his brother William and his wife who are registered for poll tax. Similarly in an Assize Roll dated 1376 he is mentioned for paying poll tax with his wife and two daughters Agnes and Marriotta together with his younger brother John Danvers and his wife, each for the sum of 4 pence. Then in an Assize Roll No 1486 50 Edward III (1376) we come across the name of John Danvers again:- *The assize came to recognise whether John Danvers, Ralph Bowyer and Alice his wife, John Blacfordby, Richard Smyth and John Shepey unjustly and without judgement dessiesed Cornelius de Wisley and Katherine his wife of their free tenement, to wit, 4 messuages, a toft, 3 virgates of land and 10 acres of meadows in Shakerston, John de Blacfordby says he holds 3 virgates of land and 3 acres of meadow cojointly sufeoffed with Joan his wife, and John their son now dead, by a feoffment of John de Whelenburgh. and four years later in a De Banco Roll 479 Jun Richard II dated 1380 John Danvers versus William de Wykyngeston in a plea of destruction of John's herbage at Shakerston to the value of £10.*

John Danvers was also a witness to an indenture at Shackerstone, dated 1383, made between Thomas Wryght, vicar of cathedral church Lichfield and Robert Stone, Joan his wife and John their son, regarding half a virgate of land in Shackerstone. It was the son of this John Danvers who we believe married Margaret Walcote of Swithland.

CHAPTER FOUR

Swithland 1425 - 1796

Swithland is not mentioned by name in the Domesday Survey, but if Nichols is correct, the hamlet must have been in existence at that time, as he says on page 1047 vol. iii, 2, that Hugh de Grentemaisnil gave the church of Swithland to the abbey of St. Evroult in Normandy. It is, however, not among the churches recorded by Orderic that Hugh bestowed on this abbey, though, in the Matriculus of Hugh Welles, c. 1225, the patron of Swithland church was the abbot of St. Evroult. Swithland was in the manor of Groby, though some of the manorial rights there may have been granted to the family of Waleys, from whom, in process of time, they came to the family of Danvers

The family of Waleys, whom Nichols confuses with a family of the same name at Wanlip, appear in 1260 in a suit by which Robert le Waleys called William de Shefeud and Margaret, his wife, to warrant to Robert 2 virgates of land in Bradgate, which Robert holds of them by charter. This led to a fine levied between the parties at Michaelmas, 1268, by which William and Margaret acknowledged the land which they held between Hologate (probably Hall gates) and Bybrok (the stream which runs by Swithland) to be the right of Robert le Waleys at a yearly rent of a halfpenny at Christmas. For which acknowledgment Robert gave them 5 silver marks.

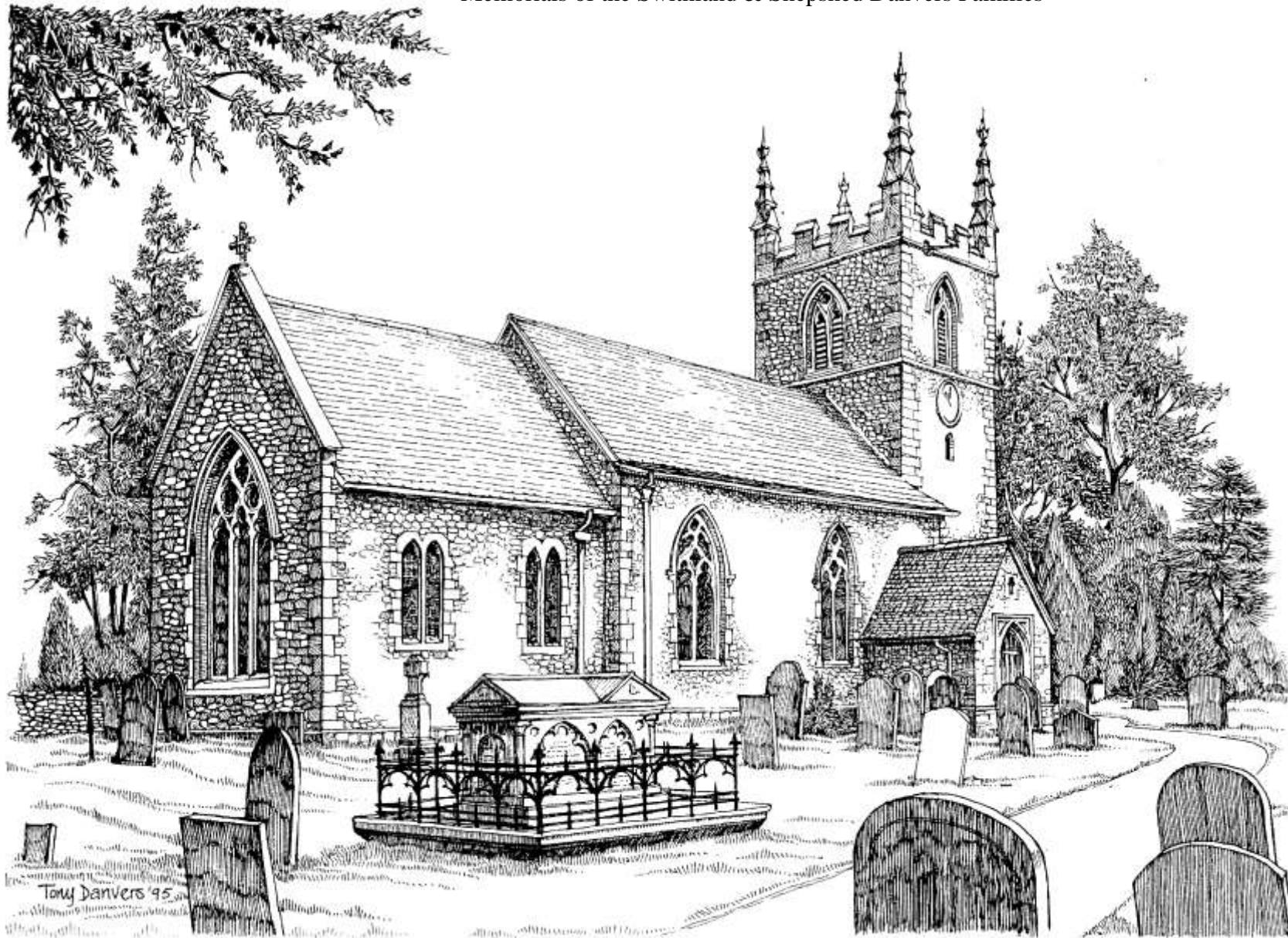
This is the first reference we have to the Waleys, of Swithland, who acquired a considerable estate there which they held under the Ferrers of Groby. Sir John Waleys, sheriff of the county of Leicester in 1343, died in 1363, leaving two daughters, Elisabeth and Margaret, as his heirs. Elisabeth married John Walcote, of Walcote, in or before 1365, by whom she had issue two daughters, Margaret and Alice, who, on their mother's death, divided the Swithland estate. Margaret married John Danvers of Shackerstone, and after his death, before 1429, Thomas Assheton. Alice married John Shepey, and after his death Richard Husband, of Ipesley, co. Warwick. With reference to the above is the De Banco Roll 675 8 Henry VI dated 1429

which mentions this division: *Richard Husband and Alice his wife, were summoned to answer Thomas Assheton and Margaret his wife, in a plea wherefore, since the same Thomas and Margaret as in right of Margaret, and Richard and Alice, as in right of Alice, together and undivided hold the manor of Swytheland, which was Elizabeth Walcote's, the mother of the said Margaret and Alice, whose heirs Margaret and Alice are, Richard and Alice do not permit partition to be made between them according to law and custom. Elizabeth Walcote their mother died seised thereof and the manor descended to the same Margaret and Alice as her daughters and heirs. The sheriff was ordered to make petition by the oaths and view of good and trusty men according to the true value of the manor into two parts one to be allotted to Margaret as her share and one to Alice as her share.*

Of particular interest is that the marriage between John Danvers and Margaret Walcote is mentioned in Nichols Vol: 4 Part 1 page 214 in this manner: *In 1319 William of Watton, William de Eure and the Abbot of Leicester were seised of lands here which they held of the honour of Leicester and in the same year Geoffrey de Walcote was seised of lands here and at Kimcote, whose granddaughter married John Danvers of Frolesworth in 1425 and being a joint heiress with her sister Alice wife of John de Shepey of Smithby, and in all probability these lands or at least her part of them, attended that marriage.* Which seems to underline the fact we have tried to establish that the Danvers family did indeed have its roots in Frolesworth.

As the partition of Swithland between Margaret and Alice is entered at great length on the De Banco Roll of 1429, Elisabeth, their mother, must have died before then, but she was living in 1413, in the Hilary term of which year a curious suit is enrolled on the Coram Rege Roll 607 (see below). From the details given it appears that Elisabeth, who had already had two husbands, both of whom she had outlived, had taken a third, John Mapilton, the younger, who ill-treated his elderly wife to such an extent that, with the assistance of her daughter Alice Shepey, Elisabeth contrived to remove from Swithland an amazing collection of furniture, with the intention of residing with Alice until she had, if ever, recovered her health, which had suffered severely from John Mapilton's treatment, not only by beating her, but with almost starving her so that her life was despaired of.

Allowing for a slight exaggeration of the unfortunate lady's grievances, John Mapilton was no doubt a bad choice for her old age; but why she wanted to take with her to Alice's house, which presumably was furnished, twelve beds, 20 pairs of sheets, 10 basons with covers, 68 brass and copper



The Parish Church of Saint Leonard, Swithland, Leicestershire.

This 13th century church came under the patronage of the Danvers family in 1425 when the family acquired Swithland village. In 1720 the old south aisle was enlarged to its present width when Sir Joseph Danvers built the Danvers chapel and porch. The church organ was a gift from his eccentric son Sir John Danvers in 1765. Sir John also gave the clock and the church bells to the church in 1764, made by Joseph Eayre of St Neots.

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pots and pans besides kettles, spoons, brewing vessels and other paraphernalia, is difficult to understand, unless she wanted to leave John Mapilton with no furniture at all in revenge for his behaviour to her. John Mapilton recovered some of the furniture, and damages against John Shepey and Alice for the abduction of his wife, as well as the value of such goods as he did not get back and his expenses in the suit; how he settled with Elisabeth is not on record. As mentioned above, the full account of this episode is recorded in the Coram Rege Roll 607, Hilary 14 Henry IV dated 1413 and makes interesting reading as follows:

John Shepey of Smythesby and Alice his wife, John Danvers the younger (therefore John Danvers the father must still be alive), and Margaret his wife, John Eyton, widower. Olas Drake, Agnes Drake, Nicholas Ryngerlide, John Battle, chaplain, and John Bowes the servant of John Shepey, have attached to answer John Mapilton the younger in a plea of seizing Elizabeth his wife at Swythland and abducting her with John Mapilton's goods and chattels on Wednesday next after the feast of St John the Baptist, 13 Henry IV (1412) to wit 4 beds one of blue colour, another of ruby colour, a third of tapestry work, and a fourth of white colour with all their apparatus to wit sylers and corteynes and 8 other beds of lesser value 2 of them of blue colour, 2 of yellow colour, 2 of green colour, 2 of red colour, 20 pair of sheets, 4 dozen vessels of brass. 10 basons with their covers, 12 spoons of silver, 20 copper pots large and 4 small ones, 4 kettles, 9 leads standing in the brewery of the said John Mapilton there, of the value of £100, by which he is deteriorated and has damages to the value of £200 and thus he produces suit. And John Shepey and Alice his wife, John Danvers and Margaret his wife, John Eyton, widow Olas, Agnes, Nicholas, John Battle and John Bowes, by Henry Chaumbre, their attorney, came and defended and say that they are in no wise guilty and put themselves concerning this.

And the said John Mapilton does likewise. And John Shepey and Alice his wife by the said Alice, says as to the coming with force and arms and all the other things contained in the brief that as to 8 small pots and 4 basins of the said goods and chattels she Alice is in no wise guilty and that the said Elizabeth the wife of the said John Mapilton is the mother of the same Alice and because the said John Mapilton treated the said Elizabeth his wife badly and unlawfully by default of victuals for her sustenance and by beating her so that Elizabeth 's life was despaired of and threatening her with loss of life and mutilation of her members, the said Elizabeth did not dare to remain any longer with the said John Mapilton her husband for fear of death, nor

did Elisabeth have sufficient victuals at the time the said trespass is supposed to have been committed she came with the said 8 pots and 4 basons of the said goods and chattels to the said Alice her daughter.

Coming back to John Danvers again, we find him mentioned in the De Banco Roll 619 Henry VI 1422 *Thomas Erdynton and Joyce his wife and Thomas Farnham offered themselves against John Danvers of Swithland Esq. and others in pleas wherefore with force and arms they turned up the soil of the said plaintiffs at Mountsorrel with certain ploughs by which the plaintiffs lost the profit of the soil for a long time.* His son also named John is mentioned with his son Reginald in the De Banco Roll 12 Edward IV 1472. *William Hastings Knight versus William Langton of Astley, gent, John Danvers of Swithland the younger, Reginald Danvers of Swithland, gent, and others in a plea of damage to William's goods and chattels worth £100 at Kerby.* John Danvers is mentioned once again in the British Museum Charters dated 1479 in an Indenture between John Danvers of Swithland and Bartholomew Kendal of Twycrosse respecting the marriage settlement of William Kendal brother of the said Bartholomew and Joyce the late wife of John Beresford and daughter of the aforesaid John Danvers.

Thomas, the son of John Danvers the younger, is mentioned in the De Banco Roll 909 4 Henry VII - 1489 which records the following: *Thomas Danvers Esq. Versus John Leighton of Shakerston in a plea of breaking his close at Shakerston.* This document also underlines the fact that the Danvers of Swithland still had interests at that time in Shackerston, which is where we believe the Swithland family originated from. We have Thomas Danvers mentioned again with his brother Reginald in another De Banco Roll 923, 8 Henry VII, dated 1493: *William Bret Versus Thomas Danvers of Swithland and Reginald Danvers of Swithland, gent, in a plea of 100 shillings.*

Following down the Swithland family tree which may be referred to on page 18 we now come to Thomas's son John who is mentioned in the De Banco Roll 978. Michaelmas, 22 Henry VII., AD. 1506. As follows: *John Danvers, son of Thomas Danvers, by William Bryan, his attorney, demands against John Gladwyn 3 messuages, 6 tofts, 120 acres of land and one rood, 38 acres and 3 roods of meadow, 3 acres of pasture, and 19d. of rent in Barowe-on-Sore and Quarendon as his right and inheritance, and into which John Gladwyn has no entry except by John Gladwyn the elder, to whom Farnham demised them who thence unjustly and without judgment disseised John Danvers the grandfather of the said John, of whose son he is the heir, after the first passage of the lord Henry, King, etc., into Gascony. And of*

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which premises he says that the said John Danvers, his grandfather, was seised in his demesne as of fee in the time of peace and of the lord Edward, late King of England, the fourth after the Conquest, by taking there from the issues to the value, etc., and from John the grandfather the right descended to Thomas Danvers as son and heir, and from Thomas the fee descended to the said John Danvers (the plaintiff) as son and heir.

John Danvers died in 1541 and was succeeded by his son Francis Danvers.

The descendants of John Danvers and Margaret continued to hold their moiety of Swithland until the beginning of the 17th century, when Francis Danvers the son of the above John Danvers purchased part of the Shepey moiety, which had by that time descended to the family of Kendall, by a fine levied at Hilary, 1629, *between Francis Danvers, esq., John Baker and Francis Blankley, plaintiffs, and Gabriel Armstronge, esq., William Walcote, gent., and Abigail, his wife, Henry Kendall, gent., and Elisabeth Kendall, widow, defendants of the manor of Swithland and a messuage, 4 cottages, a garden, an orchard, 20 acres of land, 18 of meadow, 150 of pasture, 11 of wood and common of pasture in Swithland and the forest of Charnwood. The manor, lands, etc., are declared to be the right of Francis Danvers and his heirs, and the plaintiffs gave the defendants £400.*

Unfortunately for Francis's son and heir, John Danvers, Francis died whilst John was only a minor so the lands, properties and affairs of the Swithland family were held in Trust for him by his uncle John Danvers. This is evidenced in the following Grant as is the full extent of the Danvers family holdings at this point in time: Hastings MS 7 April 1535 26 Henry VIII *Grant by John Danvers of Swithland, esq., co Leicester to John Beaumont esq., John Ashby gent, William Farnham, Thomas Tomson and John Danvers, son of the said John, of his manors of Swithland and Shakerston and his lands, tenements etc. in Lutterworth, Bitteswill, Frolsworth, Kimcote and Barwell, co Leicester, and the view of frankpledge in the manors of Swithland and Shakerston, to hold in Trust to the use of the said John Danvers and for performing his last will, then for the use of John Danvers, son and heir of Francis Danvers, the late son of the said John Danvers, now deceased, when he (John) shall attain 21 years of age, in tail male and general, and he appoints his son Edmund Danvers and Edward Beaumont as his attornies to deliver seisin to the said trustees. These being witnesses: William Wright, chaplain, Ralph Chaveney, John Chaveney and others.*

This is the Grant by John Danvers the father of Francis Danvers to his sons and grandson - so Francis the son and heir of John Danvers was dead

prior to 1535. This is confirmed by the following charter which also identifies Margaret Kyngston as being the widow of the late Francis Danvers:- British Museum, Rothley Charters No 7174 dated 1536 *Know ye all men by these presents that we, George Kyngston of Loughborough and Leicester, and Margaret Danvers, the relict of Francis Danvers are firmly bound to John Danvers of Swithland, esq., in £100 stirling to pay to John Danvers his attorney or executor on the feast of the Assumption of St., Mary the Virgin next to come. Dated 20th January 27 Henry VIII 1536.*

We see the two sons of John Danvers (born 1487), Edmund and John, also mentioned in a Common Plea Roll 1110 Trinity 33 Henry VIII 1541 - *John and Edmund Danvers, sons of the will of John Danvers esq., otherwise called "my sons and executors" versus Robert Barfote of Shakerston, gent, in a plea of £16 which he unjustly detains. Order to the sheriff to distrain him to appear.* And again in a Commons Pleas Roll dated 1541 - *Edmund joint executor with his brother, John, on their Father's Will.*

One of the most difficult aspects of the family affairs at this time is the fact that so many of the fathers, children and uncles have been given the popular family name of John. This makes trying to follow the ins and outs of all the different facts tricky to say the least. But continuing the narrative. John Danvers the son and heir of Francis Danvers as identified in his Grandfather's grant seems to have had some difficulty trying to come into his inheritance when he attained his majority of 21 years of age. This is to be seen in a Chancery proceedings whereby his uncle John's wife Edith takes him to court regarding property that she said her husband owned in Leicester and is of sufficient interest to be worth recording here.

Chancery Proceedings 1558-1579 regarding Edith Danvers of Barwell

Oratrix, Edith Davers of Barwell, widow, late the wife of John Davers, deceased. That whereas the aforesaid John was seised of a mansion house within the Town of Leycester called "the Steare" in the street then called Belgrave Gate and the next house adjoining, lying between the house of one Henry Sacheverell, gent on the South side, and a house in the tenure of Richard Yates on the North with the gardens orchard etc, belonging. By a sufficient conveyance made to him by John Davers, of Swithland, esquire, his father, who delivered the evidences concerning the premises unto John Beaumont, of Gracedieu, Esq, to be safely kept to the use of his said son who continued all his life in peaceable possession and did, by his deed dated 20 December, 33 Henry VIII [1541], demise and let the same unto George Basefeld, of Leycester, yeoman, for 31 years, paying to the said John Davers

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and his heirs a yearly rent of 4-6-4d at four times in the year by even portions. And so seised, John conveyed the same to your poor oratrix, then his wife, for term of life, paying to Thomas Davers, his eldest son, 20s only a year. After whose death John Davers, now defoster, son and heir of Francis Davers, eldest son to John Davers, the father, perceiving the poverty of your poor oratrix and knowing the evidences to be out of her hands, seeking the undoing of her and her children, brought an assize of the premises against her in County Leycester. Whereupon your said oratrix, because she was not able to stand with him in suit for want of wealth, did frame her supplication to Sir James Dier, knight, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas and William Beddowes, Justice of Assize in the same there assigned, comprehending her case, on which the Justices ordered she should have all the land conteyned in the pleynt of the assize for her natural life and pay to John Davers, now defoster, yearly the sum of 40 shillings towards keeping Thomas and George Davers, two of her husbands children, to which agreement both your oratrix and John Davers agreed, and John Davers did set his hand to it, as she is ready to show, whereby your oratrix did continue in peaceable possession for 9 years and did receive the rents at the hands of John Middleton, now tenant, till Michaelmas, 8 Elizabeth [1566], he, Middleton, confederating with John Davers, has utterly denied paying the said rent, and will not suffer her to distrain, by which means your oratrix is utterly without help unless by your good Lordship's assistance.

Answer of John Davers alias John Danvers

He says that long before the said John Davers, husband of the said complainant, had anything in the said lands mentioned in the Bill, a certain John Davers grandfather of this defendant and father to the said John husband of the complainant, was thereof seised amongst other lands, etc, and had issue one Francis Davers, the elder son, and the said John Davers, husband of the complainant, the younger son, which Francis took to wife one Margaret Kingston and had issue the said now defendant and died. And afterwards the said John, the father, died seised of the premises. By and after whose death the said lands in the Bill mentioned descended and of right ought to descend and come to this defendant as kinsman and heir of the said John Davers, his grandfather, that is to say son of Francis the eldest son of the said John. And this defendant, being at the death of the grandfather very young, the said John, his uncle, entered into the said lands and tenements contained in the Bill, and partly by crafty practice and subtle Counsel of one John Beaumont Esq, sometime master of the Rolls, then lawyer to the said John

Davers husband of the complainant, and partly through having in his hands the evidences of the said lands, continued his wrongful possession during all the time of the minority of this defendant. And after he came to his full age, being destitute of friends and wanting ability to take his remedy against the said John, suffered him to continue in wrongful possession for two years, within which the said John died, and this defendant claimed the lands at law. The arbitrates, moved by pity, gave the plaintiff the land for 40 years, should she so long live, subject to paying 40 shillings yearly to this defendant, and she held the premises until she refused to pay any longer, when this defendant considered this agreement at an end as the complainant willingly refused to pay. The complainant had in court admitted the Dissension and had wasted her goods by her own folly in suits at law, etc.

Sadly no judgement is recorded.

Edith obviously caused one or two problems for John when he came into his inheritance as we see in the following Common Pleas Roll 1200 Easter 4 Elizabeth dated 1564:- *John Danvers versus Edith Danvers in a plea wherefore she made waste and destruction of three houses, woods and gardens in Barwell which John demised to her for a term of 3 years by which waste John Danvers is being disinherited*

A copy of the will of the above Edith's late husband John Danvers of Barwell is shown on page 21. Although the original is in a very poor condition there is sufficient left to gain a fascinating insight into what was considered to be of value and importance 450 years ago. The following text is the result of many hours work trying to interpret what is still left to be read and is also an intelligent guess at some of the missing words:-

Amen the 13 day of Aprile in the yere of our Lorde god A thosande fyve hundred fyftie & 7, I John Davers of Barwell Gentilman being of good & perfect memorye do make and ordeyn this my last will & testament in manner & form folowyng fyrst I bequethe my soule to Almighty God and my body to be buried in the Churche of Barwell Item. I bequethe to ye mother Churche of Lincoln iiiid Item. I bequethe to the Church of Barwell? Item I bequethe to Thomas Davers my son my best gowne my velvet bonet my best dowblett my best hose, 2 Gold rings with stones in them, 2 of the best bason the best hewar my best fether bedd the cover the bolster and all that belongyth therto my baye foell my sworde & my buckler also I bequethe to my son Thomas Davers 20 shillings yerely to be paide owt of the lands in Leicestre whyche my father gave unto me Item I bequethe to my son my foxe furred gowne my best hatt A maser egged about with silver the table in ye

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hall with ye formes the long cofur ,1 brasse candlestick 1 hewar, 2 platters, 1 cow, 1 heyfork, & my blacke fillye. Item I bequethe to Jane Davers my daughter 1 fether bedd a cover and all that belongith therto 6 peyr of herdeyn shetes 1 candlestick 1 shavyng dyshe 1 gret pott 1 panne 2 platters 2 pewter dyshes the litle coffer 1 cow & 1 heyfor. Item I bequethe to Edmond Davers my velvet nyght cappe my cote gardid with velvett the rounde table 3 yerelyng calves & 2 lambes Item I bequethe to Richard Davers one Cloke 3 yerelyng calves & 2 lambes Item I bequethe to ..? Davers 3 yerelyng calves & 2 lambes Item I bequethe to Anne Davers 1 chavyng dyshe 1 platter 2 pewter dyshes 1 brasse pott one beetul 1 table 1 cow 2 calves & 2 lambes Item I bequethe to Marye Davers one Aumbre 1 brasse pott 1 platter 1 pewter dyshe 1 porrenger Isalver one cowe 2 calves & 2 lambes Item I bequethe to ---? One Cowe & 2 calves And these my children before named to have thes goods delyvrid unto them At the Age of 18 yeres if there should be a death before this will of eny of thes children before they come to the said Age of 18 yers then their portiones shall be divided amongst the remainder I give to John Ca---nevey? gent all my? that I have. The residew of my goods I bequethe to Edyth Davers my wife whom I make my full executrix to dyspose them for the wealth of my soul? I appoint Tomson of ? gentilman the supervisor of this my last will & Testament all trust is to have toward their peynestakeing £0 3s 4d Talcote witness with others more.

Continuing to follow the Swithland branch of the family we see from these two court cases that John, the son of Francis Danvers, had managed to gain control of the lands and properties that had been held in trust for him by his uncle John Danvers of Barwell and John Beaumont esq. but not without some difficulty. He is mentioned in the Walton in the Wolds records - *Feet of Fine 1595 between George Hastings and John Danvers against Ursula Leyston re the Manor of Walton in the Wolds.*

Also the Quorndon records show John Danvers, recorded in the Muster roll of 1583, as having - *one light horse only.* As may be seen on the tree John Danvers married Isabel Coke of Trusley in Derbyshire on the 15th May 1549 and had four daughters and one son who was named Francis after John's father. John is mentioned with his wife Isabel in a Fine October St. Michael 6 Elizabeth dated 1564:- *Between Thomas Patchett plaintiff and John Danvers, gent, & Isabel his wife, defendants, of 5 acres of land, 2 of meadow, 62 of pasture and common pasture in Hynckley and Barwell.* Also nine years later in another Fine Hilary 15 Elizabeth dated 1573 *between John Myddleton, plaintiff and John Danvers, gent, and Isabel his wife, defendants,*

of a messuage, 3 gardens, 4 acres of land and 4 shillings rent in Leicester and Belgrave.

John Danvers' son Francis was born about 1561, he married Elizabeth Skeffington sometime prior to 1591 when his eldest son William was born. He is mentioned in several documents including the following two items which may be of some interest. In a Fine Easter 38 Elizabeth 1596 *Between Francis Danvers, gent, and Anthony Harcourt, gent, plaintiffs and Nicholas Gravener, gent, and Elizabeth his wife defendants of a moiety (half) of 100 acres of meadow, and 100 of pasture in Mapplewell and common pasture in the forest of Charnwood.* Then 30 years later in 1626 Francis loaned money to the King (Charles I) and in 1629 we read that: *Henry Kendall conveyed to Francis Danvers a messuage, 4 cottages, a garden, an orchard, 20 acres of cultivated land, 18 acres of meadow, 150 acres of pasture and 11 acres of Swithland Woods (Stocking Wood).*

Francis and Elizabeth had three children, their two sons William and John and a daughter Elizabeth. Sadly Francis lost his wife Elizabeth in March 1599 and fifteen years later Francis married Bridget Worley. He was obviously not a man to be rushed into marriage. Francis Danvers was Bridget's third husband. Further details about Francis Danvers come in an oath made by Francis Danvers of Swithland that: *Mr. Banckes minster of the town of Quarndon did sometimes teach school and he had a chamber and bed in the house where commonly the Minister of the Town dwelt.* Also in an Odstone Feet of Fine 1608 *between Francis Danvers and Thomas Beaumont and his wife Elizabeth re tithes of Odstone.* We finally read of Francis Danvers' death in an inquest taken at Billesdon on 3rd of October 1631 which states *that Francis died 24th June 1631 at Swithland and his heir is his son William aged 40.*

He was buried in Swithland Church and the following memorial is inscribed on a Brass plate in the Chapel of Swithland Church: -

To the memory of Francis Danvers, Esq., on which are displayed the following arms quartered Danvers and Walcot, Danvers and Kinderton, Danvers and Shirley, Danvers and King, Danvers and Coke, Danvers and Babington, Danvers and Sacheverell, Cumberford and Danvers, and those of his two wives Skeffington and Worley. Also the following words:-

On earth to toyle and trouble not dejected In times certain and uncertain End foreseeing sought, found a better and surer being. Changed earth for heaven, time for eternity true faith in God to man firme faithfulness, honor of virtue, succour of distress just holiness prudent simplicity, With Danvers

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lived and in this grave do lie. With Danvers dead and yet not so for they immortal are and make hime live for ay.

His son William Danvers was 40 years old when he inherited his father's lands and properties. He was married to Elizabeth Babington and already had ten children by this time and according to his memorial he went on to have six more. The evidence for this number of children comes from a carved slate wall memorial in the south aisle on the south wall of Swithland Church, which states that he had 16 children; it reads as follows:-

In memory of William Danvers of Swithland Esq., who married the 4th of November 1618 Elizabeth daughter of Thomas Babington of Rothley Temple, Esq., by Catherine eldest daughter of Henry Kendal of Smithsby in Derbyshire, Esq., and had issue 16 children He died 30th August 1656 and his widow died in 1678.

William Danvers was mentioned in many documents whilst he was alive and we have picked just a few of the more interesting items. Firstly in the book 'The Medieval Parks of Charnwood Forest' by A.E. Squires page 74 Buddon Wood - 1632 Henry Kendal of Smisby, Derbyshire sold 80 acres of Woods to William Danvers. Another book 'A History of Swithland Woods' by Ronald E Gardner, shows that William held Whites Wood as well. Also it states that when he died in 1656 he also held Little Linns Wood, which his son Henry is recorded as still owning in 1677.

William Danvers appears in the Feet of Fines October St Michael 17 James I, 1619. *Between Walter Astley esq, and William Danvers plaintiffs and Robert Beresford gent and Elisabeth his wife deforcians of the Manor of Shackerston and 3 messuages, 2 cottages, 5 tofts, a water mill, a dove house, 4 gardens, 4 orchards, 100 acres of land, 40 acres of meadow 100 acres of pasture, 60 acres of furze and heath and common pasture in Shakerston and the rectory of Shackerston and its tithes £240.*

Interestingly the above Robert Beresford was William Danvers' cousin as Robert was the son of Arthur Beresford and Dorothy Danvers who was William's aunt. William is also mentioned with his brother John in a Feet of Fines Easter 7 Charles I, 1631:- *Between George Noble gent and Joseph Sacheverell gent, plaintiffs and John Danvers gent and William Danvers gent, defendants of 5 messuages, 2 cottages, 2 mills, 8 gardens, 8 orchards, 240 acres of land, 60 of meadow, 70 of pasture, 40 of furze and heath, 5 shillings rent and common pasture in Shackerston and Oddeston, the tithes of Oddeston and the moiety of the Manor of Shackerston £600 .*

Another mention of William comes in a an indenture dated 10.9.1632 at

Quorn House: *Between Gabriel Armstrong of Rempston, Nottinghamshire, William Walcote the younger of Walcott, Lincolnshire and William Danvers of Swithland. William paying them £210 did buy a parcel of land known as Kendalls Budd, in Quorndon in the parish of Barrow on Soar. This wood was later renamed Quorn Wood and remained in the Danvers hands until it passed to the Lanesboroughs. William died in August 1656 as we noted from his memorial and was succeeded by his son Henry.*

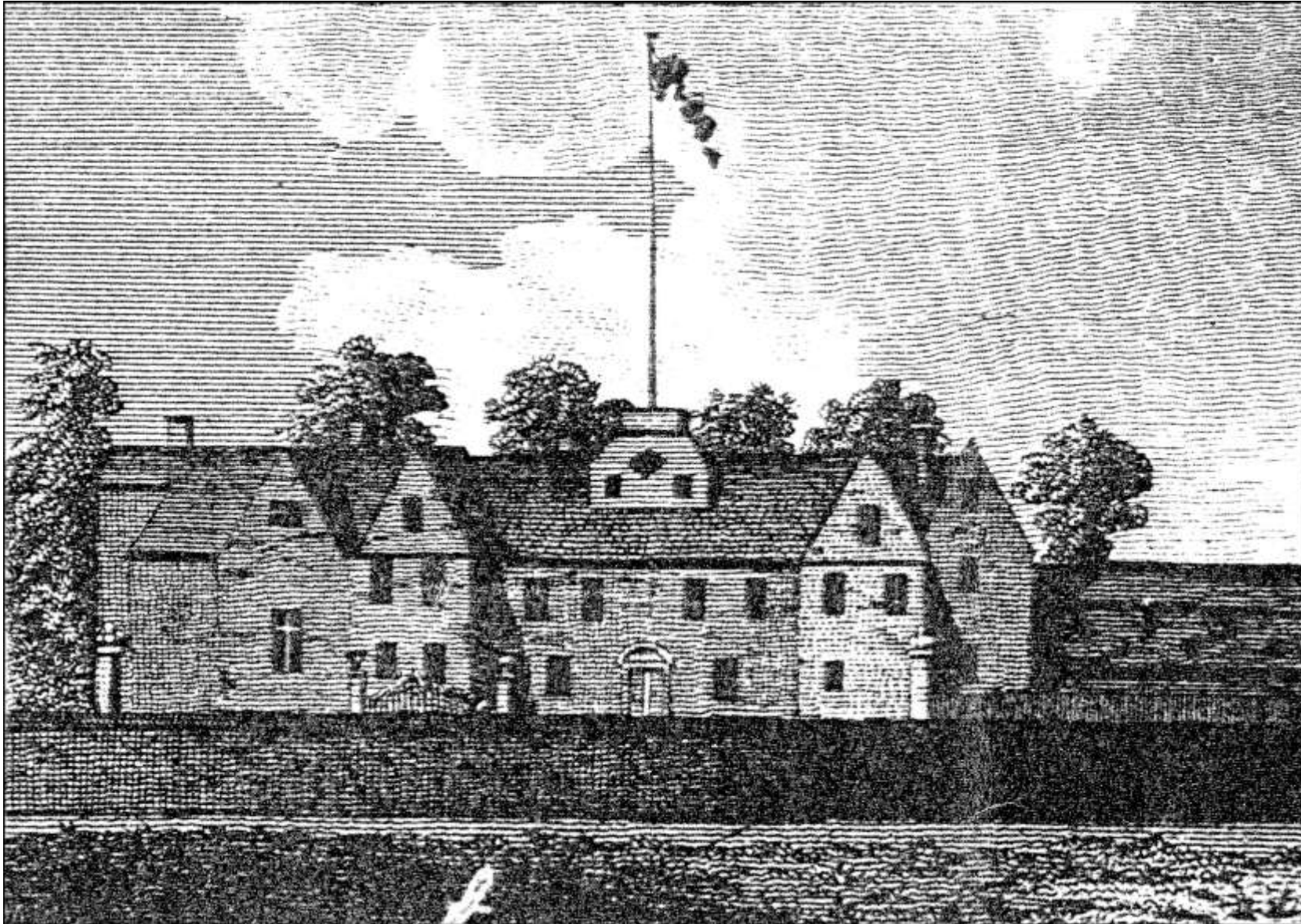
Before we leave this family it is worth mentioning William's brother John the youngest son of Francis Danvers. He was educated at Lincoln College Oxford and married Susannah Sacheverell around 1630. He had estates and land in Shackerstone, Thrussington, Odstone and Quorn as may be seen from the following records. The first mentions his holdings in Quorn from the Quorndon records: *Indenture dated 1668 by Edward Farnham allowed John use of lands belonging to the Farnhams. And from the Deeds of Quorn House we have the following record: John bought Chaveney in 1646 later it was sold by Augustus Richard Butler Danvers back to the Farnham Family.*

More evidence of his various holdings in Odstone and Shackerstone comes from the following Odstone Feet of Fines dated 1660: *Thomas Caldecot, Gilbert Finch versus Walter Bressy and Anne his wife, George Chaveney, Moron Chaveney, John Danvers, John Hackett and Susan his wife, Mary Danvers and Dorothy Danvers re: 4 messuages, a watermill, 200 acres of land, 100 acres of meadow, 400 acres of pasture, 500 of furze and heath and common pasture in Odston and the rectory of Shackerston and all tithes of grain and hay in Odston. £600.*

Another court case mentions his holdings in Skeffington in the Feet of Fines Purification 6 Charles 1st. Dated Oct 1631 Skeffington: *between Francis Bowdon, gent and John Danvers, gent, plaintiffs and Robert Barford and Katherine his wife, defendants, of a cottage, 2 gardens, 3 orchards, 20 acres of land, 20 of meadow, 200 of pasture, 40 of wood, 10 of furze and heath and a fourth part of the Manor of Skeffington. Right of John and the plaintiffs gave the defendants £300.*

Finally we have this Feet of Fines Easter 7 Charles 1st dated 1631 *Between George Noble, gent and Joseph Sacheverell gent, plaintiffs and John Danvers, gent and William Danvers gent, defendants of 5 messuages, 2 cottages, 2 mills, 8 gardens, 8 orchards, 240 acres of land, 60 of meadow, 70 of pasture, 40 of furze and heath, 5 shillings rent and common pasture in Shackerston and Oddeston, the tithes of Oddeston and the moiety of the manor of Shackerston £600.*

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A drawing of the old Swithland Hall by John Throsby, taken from John Nichols "The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester." When Throsby viewed it in 1790 he complained that it was surrounded with stables, dovecots and high walls and that he was unable to see it to advantage.

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We cannot leave without mentioning one of our favourite stories relating to this John Danvers, the youngest son of Francis Danvers, taken from the "History and Antiquities of Leicester," Thrussington, page 458 vol, iii part one, which states the following:- *Thrussington Grange is situated near the Foss road, at some distance from the village; and when Oliver Cromwell with his army took the Foss to Newark on his road to Lincolnshire, which goes straight forward on a line not far from Grange House, where John Danvers, a younger brother of the Swithland family, lived at that time with his two daughters, Dorothy and Susanna, who were afterwards his co-heiresses, this so alarmed the old gentleman, that he in a great hurry hid a jug full of gold on the bank of the canal.*

Whether his memory was treacherous, and he forgot to take it up, or he died in the interim, family tradition doth not mention; but it was found many years after by a shepherd sitting on the bank tending his sheep, when the edges of the vessel appeared that contained the cash. This raised that family all at once to some little eminence; but it has dwindled again almost to its pristine state, for want of knowing what money meant and its true worth!"

Up to this point in our history of the Swithland Danvers family we have been reasonably certain that the person or persons we have been discussing through the documents that existed at the time relate to them and no other. This Henry Danvers however presents us with a problem in that there appear to have been two Henry Danvers living at this period of time. So great care must be taken with the information we are now about to present. We have details of two Henry's who were alive at the same time and unfortunately both Henry's have references to Stoke Newington in Middlesex. One Henry is said to have died in exile in Holland 1687 and is buried in the Vault in an English Church in Utrecht. Besides the children we have listed, Henry Danvers and Anne Coke had another son and a daughter whose names are unknown to us. The following information can refer to either of these Henrys. Sadly no wills can be found for any of the supposed death dates. However on the 16th December 1829 the following was extracted from a book at Belgrave belonging to Sir Joseph Danvers regarding the memoirs of the Danvers family and Henry Danvers in particular:-

"The family continued in the name of John for eight or nine generations lineally to that time till Francis Danvers whose heir was William that married with Elizabeth ye eldest daughter of Thomas Babington of Temple Rothley esq, and had issue sixteen children of which Henry was the surviving eldest son. Francis dyed at Swithland aged 72 William at the same



Sir John Coke in his robes as Master of Requests circa 1622 by Cornelius Janssens.

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place aged 66 and Henry dyed at Uytrecht in Holland aged 65 and lyes buried in a vault in the English church at Uytrecht.

If this information was good enough for Sir Joseph Danvers, as this Henry was his grandfather after all, then it should be also good enough for us to consider pursuing this particular Henry for our own purposes.

Henry Danvers was a prominent figure in the affairs of state at the time; he had a fascinating life and is worthy of a book dedicated to him alone. Much has been written about him already and it is to those sources we have turned to try to flesh out his character. The following extract was taken from an article in the Baptist Quarterly written by G. F. Nuttall:

Henry was the son of William and Elizabeth Danvers of Swithland, near Loughborough, Leicestershire, where the Danvers family had resided for several generations. He was born on the 8th of July 1622. His father was a cousin of Sir John Coke, of Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire. Sir John himself, a Secretary of State notable for his absolutist monarchical principles, was a pronounced Protestant and eventually turned to Puritanism and the cause of Parliament. Relations between the Coke and Danvers families were close when the Civil War broke out, there was an abortive plan for Sir John Coke to remove from Melbourne to Swithland for greater security. The links were strengthened when Henry Danvers became the second husband of Sir John's daughter Anne. We do know that Henry Danvers of Swithland married Anne Coke on the 18th of March 1644. She was the third daughter of John Coke who was the Secretary of State at the time. Anne was a highly intelligent lady who was said to be learned in the Hebrew and Greek scriptures.

For further information on the life and times of Henry Danvers we must now refer to another article published in the Baptist Quarterly on the 29th of January 1981 written by professor Richard Greaves, Professor of History at Florida State University.

Henry Danvers may have studied at Trinity College, Oxford, for the title-page of the Congregational Library copy of his 1663 tract, *The Mystery of Magistracy Unveiled*, contains an annotation suggesting as much. As a young man of approximately twenty when the Civil War erupted, he supported the parliamentary cause and ultimately became a colonel in its forces. His position in the shire and commitment to the parliamentary cause were responsible for his service on the Staffordshire County Committee from 1647 to 1652, and he was also a justice of the peace, in which capacity he was "well beloved among the people, being noted for one who would not take bribes." On 15th and 16th June 1649 the Council of State directed

Major Danvers to make plans for the demolition of Belvoir Castle to prevent its use by Royalists. It was perhaps in this connection that the Council of State commissioned him as a major in the Leicestershire militia on 5th March 1650, although two months later, on 14th May, he also received a commission as colonel in the Staffordshire militia. It was during his tenure as Governor of Stafford that Danvers embraced Baptist views, having formerly been an Independent, and joined the General Baptist congregation associated with Henry Hagggar. He had already written in favour of religious toleration in *Certain Quaeries Concerning Liberty of Conscience, 1649*. (See page 143)

On 15th June 1653, two weeks before the opening of the Nominated Assembly (Barebones Parliament) on 4th July, the Council of State ordered lodgings for Danvers in London. In that Assembly he sat for Leicester and served on committees dealing with tithes, Scottish affairs, and prisons and poor prisoners. In the Assembly's debates he distinguished himself by speaking out in favour of religious toleration. As a trustee for the use of sequestered tithes during the Commonwealths (1649-50), Danvers brought some expertise to the committee on tithes, which included such other prominent radicals as Harrison, Courtney, and Arthur Squibb. These men were adherents of the Fifth Monarchy movement, a group Danvers himself joined while in London. (see notes on the Fifth monarchy at the end of this chapter).

At the Restoration Danvers lost his positions but not his militancy. He did take the precaution of placing his estate in the hands of trustees, hoping to ensure its security, though apparently without the success he sought. In 1661 he was reported to be living in the village of Stoke Newington outside London and allegedly planning a rising with such disaffected radicals as Clement, Ireton and John Okey. According to informers Danvers had agents in Leicestershire for this purpose, possibly men he had worked with in the early 1650s in that county. Certainly Henry Danvers was associated with Sir John Hartopp of Freeby, Leics., and his wife Elizabeth. Conventicles frequently met at their home at Stoke Newington, where Danvers himself lived after the Restoration. Among those known to have attended these conventicles were Danvers, Jessey, and Nathaniel Strange, another Calvinistic Baptist, Fifth Monarchist, and former army officer. On 30th December 1663 the government issued a warrant for the arrest of Colonel Danvers, Strange, and the Fifth Monarchist John Skinner.

In January 1664 Colonel Danvers was alleged to be involved in a plot to enlist in forces to be raised in the spring of 1664 to fight the Turks and then

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turn those forces against the English government. The authorities still had not been able to get their hands on him in April, and in June he was reported conniving with rebels in London and preaching in Leicestershire. Allegedly his new plot aimed at the overthrow of the Stuarts in late July. Although Danvers was finally apprehended in August 1665, he was rescued in Cheap-side by a friendly crowd which presumably, included numerous Baptists and Fifth Monarchists. On the 30th of August he was charged with high treason and summoned by proclamation to stand trial. The Sheriff of Leicestershire was ordered to secure Danvers' estate in that county pending the outcome of the trial. The following note may be found in the Domestic State Papers of Charles II dated August 30th 1665 No: 74:

The King to the Sheriff of Leicestershire. Danvers, long since charged with high treason, and summoned by proclamation for trial, was lately apprehended, but has escaped. He is to enquire about a good estate which Danvers is said to have, in manors, lands, &c, in the county, inventory his goods, and put them into responsible hands till Danvers prosecution; meanwhile the farmers and tenants are to retain the rents.

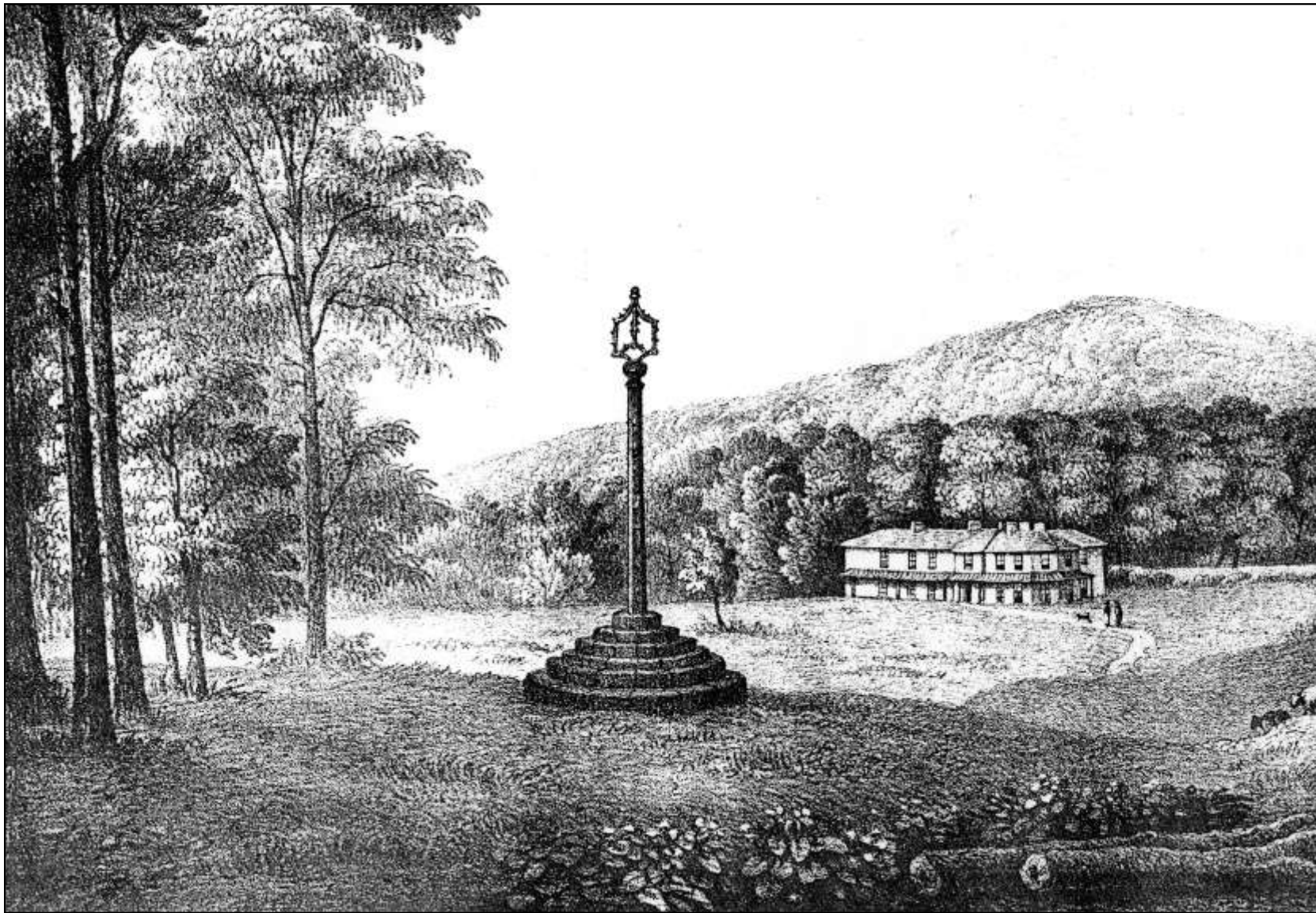
The plot in which he was now alleged to be involved - usually known as the Rathbone Plot - was supposed to go into action on 3rd September 1665, when Charles would be assassinated, the Tower seized, London put to the torch, a republic established, and property redistributed. A number of schemers, including Colonel John Rathbone, were apprehended and eight executed, though Danvers again eluded his pursuers.

Nothing more is heard of Henry Danvers until 28th May 1670, when a new warrant was issued ordering that he be taken into custody. The state remained frustrated in its endeavours to apprehend Danvers, and a chagrined Earl of Arran seemed surprised to discover in May 1671 that there were two Colonel Danvers, "both dangerous fellows". Still in hiding, Danvers next turned his attention to the subject of baptism in his *Treatise of Baptism* (1673). It is particularly interesting because it was part of a broad and heated controversy over the nature of baptism and whether or not it was essential for church membership and communion. When the government next noticed Danvers on 27th November 1675, there was some surprise that "a person of his quality and estate" was preaching on foot throughout the country. At last the authorities apprehended him as he was leaving a conventicle near Aldgate, where he was a joint-elder. A warrant of 16th January 1676 directed that he be committed to the Tower for treason. He was there only briefly when his health deteriorated sufficiently for a warrant to be issued for

his discharge on 28th April 1676, on payment of £1000 security. He was confined to his house. Apparently undaunted Danvers was believed the following year to be involved in a fresh plot to assassinate Charles, his brother, and William of Orange, and possibly bring back Richard Cromwell as titular head of state. No later than 1679 Danvers moved closer to the Whig mainstream and even managed the parliamentary election of Algernon Sidney that year. As the government's attention was increasingly devoted to the exclusion controversy, Danvers grew bolder in his pulpit appearances. In December 1681 he was reported ministering to a London Conventicle, and by the following year he was said to have a congregation of some seven hundred in the City. Against the background of the revelations of the Popish Plot, Samuel and Titus Oates visited Danvers at Stoke Newington in January 1682. Danvers made known to them his conviction that those who lost lands at the Restoration must have them restored. The culmination of Danvers' career of scheming and plotting came in 1685. When it became apparent that the Duke of York would succeed Charles II, Danvers planned an insurrection in London on the day of the coronation, relying on some five hundred men from Essex and Hertfordshire who could enter the City under the guise of celebrating the event. These plans, however, were set aside when he was informed of the Duke of Monmouth's intention to raise England. Although warned by Captain Robert Perrott, a Fifth Monarchist, that Danvers could not be trusted, the Duke resolved to leave the city in the care of the colonel. In many respects conditions were propitious for Danvers, particularly since many of the troops loyal to James had already marched westward. Yet with several thousand men ready to rise in the City, Danvers refused to act. After the rebellion was suppressed the government on 27th July gave Danvers twenty days to surrender, but he escaped to Holland. For Danvers and probably most of those who rose in 1685, this was the last blow struck on behalf of the Good Old Cause.

In Holland Danvers must have spent his last years in consternation about the Jacobean government, but he also had economic interests abroad. He was a major investor in a scheme to employ exiles, many of whom were west country folk experienced in cloth manufacture. With Monmouth's associate Joseph Billiard and others he was responsible for establishing an English centre for the manufacturing of cloth at Leewarden in Friesland, and a comparable effort got underway at Luneberg. Danvers did not live to see the Glorious Revolution, which in any case would have been too conservative for him to sanction. He probably died late in 1687 or early in 1688, for on

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John Flower's drawing of Swithland Hall. It was drawn on stone at the turn of the 19th Century showing the farm which we believe may have been used by the Earl of Lanesborough as his residence, after the fire which destroyed the Old Hall, whilst the present Swithland Hall was being built. In the foreground stands the ancient Cross which was taken from Mountsorrel by Sir John Danvers

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2nd March 1688 it was noted that he had "died lately" at Utrecht, still outlawed for treason.

Henry Danvers is historically significant in providing a clear contact between Algernon Sidney and the Green Ribbon Club on the one hand and the shadowy world of radical revolutionaries on the other. The government's repeated inability to lay its hand on him and his open preaching to hundreds in London in 1682 are a curious comment on the effectiveness of Stuart rule.

Henry Danvers is also an important figure in our story for one other fact; it was from his youngest son William that the Shepshed line of the Danvers family originated. This will be dealt with fully in the next chapter but for now we continue with the Swithland branch of the Danvers family. Henry's eldest son John sadly died in infancy so it was his second son Samuel who inherited the Swithland estates. Samuel married Elizabeth Morewood on the 20th December 1683 in St James, Dukes Place, London. This is confirmed in a family bible that contained the following information on the fly-leaf:-

Samuel D'anvers, given me by Father Morewood, October 13th, 1685.

1. *"Samuell D'anvers married Elizabeth Morewood, on the 20th of December 1683."*
2. *"Elizabeth D'anvers was born on the 13th of October 1684 att Newington, Monday night "*
3. *"Samuel D'anvers was born on the 31st of October 1685 att Newington Satterday morning a quarter before one "*
4. *"Henry D'anvers was born on thirteenth of November 1686 att Newington, Friday morning about nine of the clock ""*
5. *"Joseph D'anvers was born on the 24th of December 1687, att Newington Satterday att Noon 'between twelve and one"*
6. *"Anne D'Anvers was born on the 12th of January 1688 about a Quarter before on Satterday morning att Rotherby "*
7. *"Mary D'anvers was born on the 5th of November 1690 between two and three in the morning att Swithland, Wednesday morning "*
8. *"John D'anvers was born on the 11th of November 1691 att Swithland Wensday Evening about seven of the clock "*
9. *"Ellen D'anvers was born on the 2nd of January 1691 about a Quarter after twelve att night "*
10. *"Frances D'anvers was born 1693 "*

This Bible was previously owned by a member of the Townshend family, as the binding is ornamented with silver initials J. T, and the following entry occurs: *"Memorandum 22 December 1665 John Townshend was borne in London and was baptised."*

As may be seen from the above Samuel and Elizabeth had nine children, the youngest Francis, dying in December 1697 when only four years old. The youngest daughter appears not to have married and seems to have spent her life on good works as evidenced by her Memorial Inscription in the Church of Our Lady and St. Nicholas, Wanlip, Leicestershire.

Here lyeth the body of Mrs. ELEANOR DANVERS one of the daughters of SAMUEL Danvers of Swithland in Leicestershire, Esq., She died in October 1758. Her piety to her God, her charity to the poor, joined with a great degree of every christian virtue made her beloved and lamented by all that knew her. Her friends have lost a most valuable treasure, the poor a generous benefactress and her acquaintances a most excellent example.

Samuel died on the 4th of December 1693 and was buried in the church of St Margaret's, Westminster. Although his wife Elizabeth was only about twenty eight years old when Samuel died she waited another 18 years before she eventually decided to marry John Danvers of Prestcot, a very distant relative of her husband, on the 3rd of January 1711. John Danvers is of very great interest to us in that his father was Sir John Danvers of Chelsea the regicide who signed the death warrant of Charles I. Also his two uncles Charles and Henry, brothers of Sir John Danvers have interesting life stories to relate. Charles was involved in an abortive plot with the Earl of Essex to try to persuade Queen Elizabeth to change the government by force. He was also involved in the murder of Henry Long with his brother Henry Danvers.

We have decided therefore to divert our attention from the Swithland Danvers for a moment to relate the fascinating stories surrounding these three brothers which appeared in 'The Memorials of The Danvers Family' written by Macnamara, previously mentioned in our preface, from which we now quote:- *Sir Charles Danvers, the eldest son of John Danvers and Elizabeth Nevill, was born about the year 1568. He matriculated at Oxford, and was created M.A. June 16, 1589; subsequently he joined the Middle Temple. But before taking the M.A. degree Sir Charles was travelling on the Continent, for we find him as early as 1584 writing to thank Walsingham for having obtained permission for him to travel. He was M.P. for Cirencester 1586-87. In 1588 he was serving in the army, under Lord Willoughby in the Netherlands, and was knighted by him in the year 1588.*

Then followed, in 1594, the implication of Sir Charles in the death of Mr. Henry Long, his flight with his brother Henry to France, and their outlawry, which was terminated by their pardon in August of 1598. The pardon was, however, conditional on the brothers contenting Sir Walter Long, Henry

*Extract taken from the exhibition catalogue of the
'Treasures of the Hermitage'*

By the time Van Dyck painted him, Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby (1573-1644), was one of the most venerable members of Charles I's court, having served under both Elizabeth I and James I. The second son of Sir John Danvers and his second wife, Elizabeth Nevill, he began his career as a page to Sir Philip Sidney. As a soldier, he fought in the Low Countries under Prince Maurits of Orange, in the armies of Henri IV of France, where he may have gained the abiding scar near his left eye which Van Dyck depicts, and in Ireland under the Earl of Essex. By 1602 he held the rank of Sergeant Major-General of the Army.

In middle age, and at the court of James I, Danvers became a connoisseur of pictures and an admirer of Rubens, from whom he commissioned a Self-portrait in 1623; this he presented to the Prince of Wales, later Charles I. Thereafter, honours came thick and fast. In 1626, he was created 1st Earl of Danby; two years later, he was made a Privy Councillor. In November 1633, Danby was installed as a Knight of the Order of the Garter, thus becoming one of the small company of 'persons of the highest honour' selected by the King for the highest order of chivalry in England. It is this honour that Van Dyck's portrait celebrates. The result is the only full-length of a Garter Knight in full robes that Van Dyck painted. But Danby himself succeeds in dominating the white, gold and red splendour of his costume. Sixty years old by the time of his installation, Danby is evidently still a man of action, his figure lean and energetic, the battle-scar inflicted four decades earlier still (under a black patch) in evidence.

Aubrey gives a pen-portrait of Danby: 'tall and spare; temperate; sedate and solid; lived mostly at Cornbury; a great improver of his estate. All his servants sober and wise'. In 1617 he had been granted the Rangership of Cornbury Park in the royal forest of Wychwood; and there, in 1632-3, he employed the sculptor and master mason Nicholas Stone to transform a former hunting lodge into Cornbury House, in 'one of the earliest attempts to design a classical house front in England'.

In Oxford, in 1621, Danby founded and endowed the first Physic Garden in England, for the study of plants with medicinal qualities. He employed Nicholas Stone to build (and probably design) three stone gateways to this garden, which was ready for occupation in 1642. Danby appointed Jacob Brobart, a former Brunswick soldier, as its keeper. Danby died at home in Cornbury in 1644, unmarried and in his seventy-first year.



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Long's brother, by paying him £1,500. In the year 1596 we find the Earl of Shrewsbury writing from Rouen to Cecil: *'Heare is daily with me Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers, two discreet fine gentlemen who carry themselves heare with great discretion, reputation, and respect.'* Then on June 20, 1598, Sir Charles writes from Paris to Secretary Cecil: *'I am infinitely indebted for your care to finish this long exile. In your industry you seem to have drawn the offices of all other men into your hands. Pray take care that what you have carried through so many storms perish not in the entry of the harbour.'*

In the year 1599 Sir Charles was given a colonel's commission in Essex's army in Ireland, and the intimacy which he there formed with his commander, together with his devotion to the Earl of Southampton to whom he considered himself indebted for saving his life by the shelter which he afforded him after the 'Long' catastrophe led to his becoming implicated in the conspiracy of those noblemen in the year 1601. The conspiracy is matter of history. Sir Charles, in one of his examinations before the Council, stated that he bore no malice to anyone, but was drawn into the affair by affection to the Earl of Southampton, to whom he owed his life. It was clearly proved before the Council, and, indeed, confessed by Sir Charles, that the part assigned to him was to overpower the guard at the door of the presence chamber in Whitehall Palace, while the Earl of Essex sent others to guard the court and water gate. The place having been thus secured, Essex, Southampton, and Rutland were to present themselves to the Queen, and to obtain from her authority to change the Government, and to call a Parliament, which they trusted would condemn their opponents for misgoverning the State. Finally, Sir Charles was found guilty, and condemned to death.

His old friend Cecil, amongst others, grieved for his fate, which, however, he was unable to avert. On February 9 the Earls of Essex, Rutland, and Southampton, and Lord Sandys were brought to the Tower at 3 a.m. by the Lord Admiral and others, and in the afternoon of the same day Lords Cromwell and Monteaagle and Sir Charles Danvers by Sir Walter Raleigh and others. On March 18, 1601, between 7 and 8 a.m., Sir Charles Danvers was brought from the Tower to the new scaffold erected for the execution of the Earl of Essex, and was there beheaded, and his body was the same day buried in the Tower Church.

Sir Charles bore his death with a most Christian calmness and composure, having first craved God's pardon and the Queen's, to whom he wished all prosperity; as also the Lord Gray, who was there present, to whom he

acknowledged he had been ill affected, not from any injury he had suffered from him, but purely on the Earl of Southampton's account, to whom the Lord Gray professed an absolute enmity." Under the attainder, Sir Charles's large property in Wiltshire and elsewhere was forfeited to the Crown, but it was restored to his brother Henry by James I. in July, 1603.

The death of Henry Long at the hands of Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers caused no little sensation at the time, but the attendant circumstances have been very variously told by friends and foes of the family. The story, as given by Aubrey in his 'History of North Wilts,' is briefly as follows: Henry Long, the victim, was the younger brother of Sir Walter Long, of a family long seated in the county, neighbours of the Danvers, and from time to time associated with them as members of Parliament, Sheriffs, or Justices of Peace for the county. The narrative states that the nature of the provocation, whether public or private, remains unknown, but the murder was committed on October 4, 1594, at a house in Corsham, where several gentlemen, including Sir Walter Long, were assembled. Sir Henry Danvers, followed by his brother and a number of tenants and retainers, burst into the room, and without more ado shot Henry Long dead upon the spot. The brothers then fled to Whitley Lodge, a secluded place near to Titchfield House, the seat of Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. There they appear to have been sheltered and maintained for a time by the Earl, and with his assistance they escaped across Southampton Water to Calshot Castle, and thence to France, where they remained till they were pardoned in August, 1598.

Very different, however, is the story told by Lady Danvers, the mother of the offenders, in her petition on their account to the Privy Council. The petition is extant, though somewhat mutilated, amongst the Domestic State Papers at the Record Office, and with it is a duplicate, which seems to have been prepared as instruction to counsel. The latter is dated April 15. The heading of the documents runs: *'Grounds of the mislike of Sir Walter Long and Henry Long against Sir John Danvers. The grounds stated are that, owing to the industry of Sir John, two robberies had been brought home to Sir Walter's servants, and that Sir Walter had been reprehended by the Justices of Assize for his action in the matter, and, further, that he was committed to prison for his conduct towards Sir John Danvers. Another ground of mislike was that, on another occasion, Sir John Danvers, as a Justice of the Peace, had committed four of Sir Walter's servants for a murder of which they were guilty. Because of Sir John's action, Sir Walter and his brother, followed by many insolent servants, provoked an affray in*

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Hall Farm, Swithland, Leicestershire.

Hall Farm stands adjacent to the site of the Old Swithland Manor House as portrayed by Throsby on page 24. Immediately below the middle window may be seen Sir Joseph Danvers' coat of arms. Sir Joseph's name is also carved on the beam of one of the nearby barns. This picture clearly shows some of the attributes depicted by Flower in his drawing of Swithland Hall on page 28. This leads us to believe that it may have been used as the Manor House whilst the present Hall was being built.

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which a servant of the Danvers family was killed, and another dangerously wounded. Sir Walter had also entered the house of one of Sir John's tenants, and had there, unprovoked, thrown a glass of beer in the face of Sir John's principal servant. Sir Charles Danvers, knowing of Sir Walter's insolent behaviour, questioned him as to his privity to the outrage, and requested satisfaction, which was conceded. But Sir Charles received from Henry Long a very violent letter, in which he gave him the lie in the throat, and called him 'ape, puppie, foole, and boye.'

Then follows Lady Danvers' account of the affray which resulted in Henry Long's death. *Sir Charles being moved by the continued insolence of the Longs, determined to requite publicly so many and great disgraces, and repaired with friends to the ordinary at Corsham, where Henry Long happened to be in company with others, and entering the room struck him with a stick, cudgelled him and having done so turned to leave the room. But the door being fastened by one of Long's company, Long and his friends fell upon and dangerously wounded Sir Charles. Meanwhile Sir Henry Danvers burst his way into the room, and, seeing his brother bleeding and fainting, discharged his pistol at Henry Long, believing that only by so doing he could save his brother's life. Then the document goes on to state that since the death of his brother, Sir Walter Long had endeavoured to hinder justice by, though a party in the affair himself, taking down the testimony of undue witnesses, and that he had endeavoured to corrupt others, and further had riotously and outrageously pulled down enclosures upon the Danvers estate. But here the remainder of the statement in both copies of the petition has been torn away.*

Finally, whether because of the interest made for them by the French King, whose service the brothers had entered, and whose notice they had won by their conspicuous bravery, or because inquiry had proved that the account of the affair given by Lady Danvers was correct, the brothers were pardoned in June, 1598, and returned to England the following August. But the coroner's indictment, on which they were outlawed, was not reversed till the year 1604, and then on a technical ground. In suing for a writ of error the representatives of the brothers endeavoured to upset the indictment on the plea that the Latin was bad, so bad that it was not Latin at all. This plea was rejected, but the fact that the word 'percussit' was omitted in the account of the shooting was accepted as a valid ground against the indictment, and accordingly it was quashed.

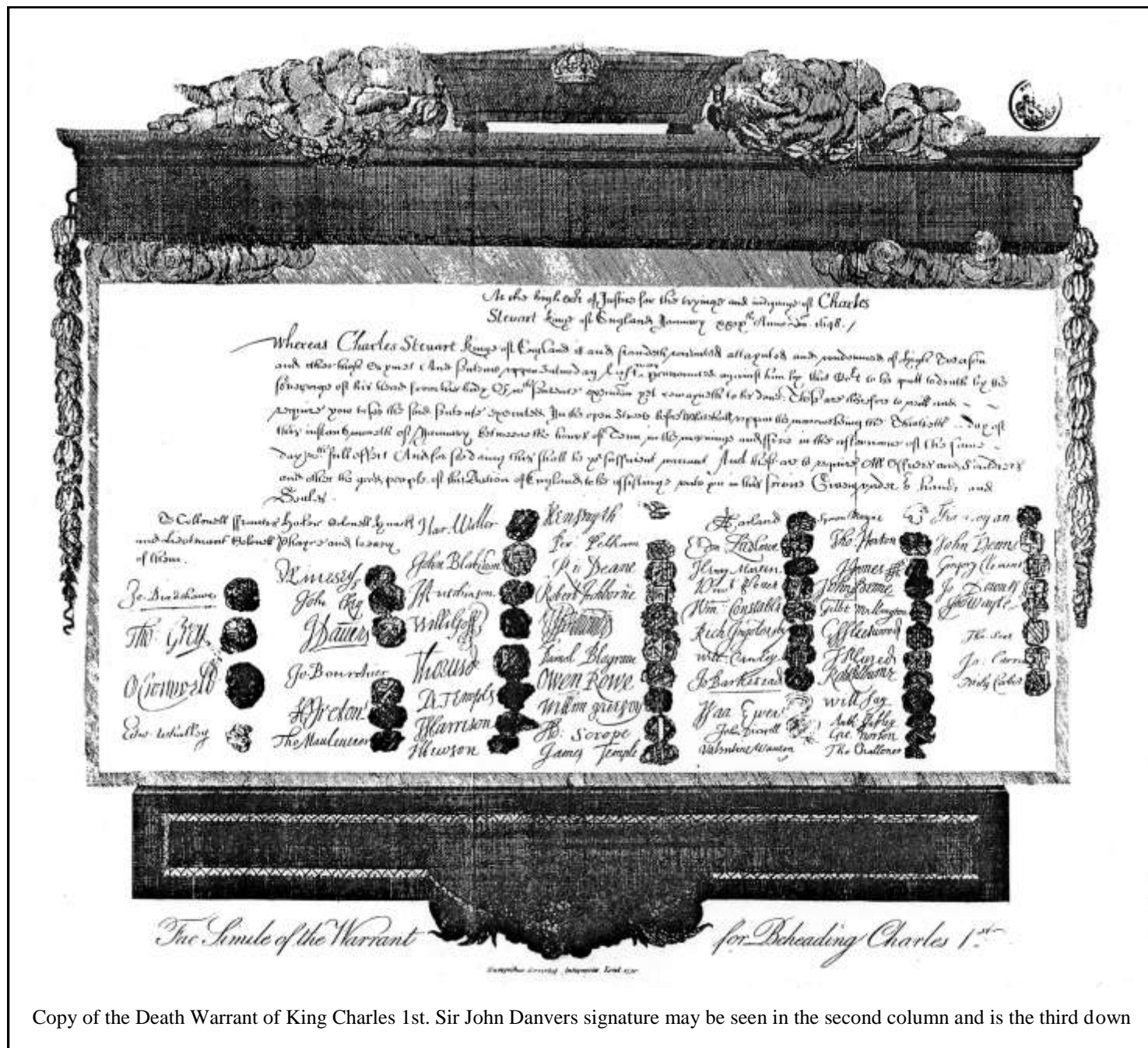
While the above is passing through the press, the Times of November 20,

in a review of the fourth volume of the Hatfield Papers, has the following allusion to the exile of Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers : *'The adventures of Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers, and their flight in consequence of a fatal quarrel with Henry Long, form in themselves almost a historical novel; but the details, though fairly plentiful, fail to satisfy one's curiosity. The brothers escaped to France, whence Charles Danvers sought the aid of Sir R. Cecil.*

To quote the excellent preface to this correspondence: "It was not infrequently the practice at this time, beneath the wax which sealed the missive, to fasten down a number of strands of fine silk. So attached to the letter now referred to, securely held in the waxen seal, is a skein, composed not of silk, but of what, microscopically examined, proves to be human hair. It is of a yellow flaxen colour and of fine texture, and if, as not improbably is the fact, it is a lock cut by himself from his own abundant tresses, here is at once lively evidence of a kind of sentimental appeal to Cecil's heart and a pathetic and remarkable relic of the woeful exile, Charles Danvers.

Sir Henry Danvers, second son of Sir John Danvers and Lady Elizabeth daughter of Sir John Nevill, last Baron Latimer was born at Dauntsey, Wiltshire on the 28th of June 1573. He matriculated at Christ Church College, Oxford, in May, 1589. In the year 1591 he was knighted before Rouen by the Earl of Essex. In the year 1594 he took part in the affray which led to the death of Henry Long, and was exiled till August, 1598. During his exile Henry Danvers served with distinction in the French army, and thus prepared himself for the important post which he subsequently held in the English army. Sir Henry served also in the navy, and the Earl of Nottingham called him the best sea-captain in England.

In the year 1605 Sir Henry was restored as blood heir to his father by Act of Parliament, and was settled in the estates which, on his brother's attainder, had been forfeited to the Crown. In July 1603 he was created Baron Danvers of Dauntsey, and in February 1625, Earl of Danby. The Earl was noted for his hospitality and liberality. It is said the expenses of his kitchen at Cornbury amounted to £3,000 yearly, and as examples of his liberality we have his foundation of the Botanic Garden at Oxford, and his restoration of Dauntsey Church. Aubrey relates that his installation as Knight of the Garter was the greatest solemnity known in the memory of man. The Earl was a steady loyalist, and had he lived till the Sequestrators began their work would no doubt have been heavily fined. As it was a fine of upwards of £20,000 was imposed on his estate. He died in the year 1643, and was buried



Copy of the Death Warrant of King Charles 1st. Sir John Danvers signature may be seen in the second column and is the third down



Portrait of Sir John Danvers of Chelsea, the Regicide

under a fine marble monument in the chapel which he had built on the north of the chancel of Dauntsey Church.

Sir John Danvers, third son of the elder Sir John and his wife Elizabeth Nevill, was born about the year 1585, and on July 16, 1601, at the age of sixteen, matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford. In March, 1611-12, he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn on the request of Thomas Wentworth, Recorder. He was knighted at Royston on March 3, 1608-9, and shortly after, when about twenty years of age, married Magdalen, daughter of Sir Robert Newport, widow of Richard Herbert, of Montgomery Castle, and the mother of ten children, who were living at the time of her second marriage. Of these children, the eldest son was Edward, who succeeded his father in the family estates; another son was Lord Herbert of Cherbury; and another, the best known of all, the saintly George Herbert, poet and divine.

Magdalen was forty years of age when she married Sir John Danvers, who was captivated as much by the beauty which she still retained as by her wit and accomplishments, and the sweetness and nobility of her character. The year after his marriage Sir John Danvers entered Parliament as member for Arundel. He was member for Montgomery in the year 1614, in the years 1645-53 he sat in the Long Parliament for Malmesbury.

That Sir John was a well-read man and of scholarly tastes, we learn from the circumstance mentioned by Aubrey that Lord Bacon frequently visited him at Chelsea, and that he submitted to him his 'History of Henry VII' for criticism before it was printed. Aubrey says of him *that he had a fair body and a mind harmonical, and his was a complexion so beautiful that during his travels abroad people would come after him in the street to admire him; and, moreover, he had a fine fancy, chiefly for gardens and architecture.*

His house at Chelsea stood close to the river, near to Old Chelsea Church and to the mansion once inhabited by Sir Thomas Moore. The house, a very sumptuous one, enriched with marbles, was surrounded by fine gardens laid out after the Italian method. Aubrey, in his Letters tells us that the chimney-piece of Sir John's chamber was formerly that of the chamber of Sir Thomas More. Here Sir John received the many visitors, nobles, statesmen, divines, philosophers, and wits whom the fame of his house and the beauty and wit of his noble wife attracted. Here, too, Sir John showed generous hospitality to the children of his wife by her former husband, and more especially to her daughters and to her son George, who, writing from college, acknowledges many favours received from his stepfather. Here, too, in the May of the year 1627, Magdalen Danvers died, and hence she was carried to her burial, not

in the splendid tomb which she had provided at Montgomery, but in a grave unmarked, and now unknown, in Old Chelsea Church.

Sir John Danvers was a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to Charles I., but early in that King's reign he began to put himself in opposition to the Crown, and his house at Chelsea, formerly the rendezvous of loyal gentlemen, became, to the grief of his wife and brother, a very centre of sedition, and a meeting-place for the men who were engaged in plotting against the Church and King. It is said, and this is not unlikely, that Sir John's disloyal tendencies were fostered by a disposition soured by the pecuniary difficulties in which his extravagant expenditure on house and gardens and entertainments had involved him.

The year after his first wife's death Sir John Danvers took, as his second wife, Elizabeth, one of the daughters and heiresses of Ambrose Dauntsey, Esq. With Elizabeth Sir John obtained in dower the rich manor of West Lavington; and here, in his new home in Wiltshire, he again gave the reins to his love for extravagance in gardening, planting, and display. By this his second wife, Sir John had several children. She died in the year 1636, and was buried at West Lavington. Sir John remained a widower for twelve years, and then, in the year 1648, married his third wife, Grace, daughter of Thomas Hewes, of Kimerton, by whom he had one son, John. Grace survived her husband, and, dying in the year 1670, was buried at Isleworth. But in the meantime Sir John had thrown in his lot with the rebels, and was returned by Malmesbury as a Parliament man in the year 1645.

In the year 1649 he served as one of the Commissioners appointed to try the King, and of his judges John was the only one whose face King Charles recognised. Sir John took an active part in the trial, and was one of those who signed the death-warrant. On his brother's death, in the year 1643, Sir John Danvers removed to Dauntsey, and, not content with the large estates which had been left by the Earl to his nephew Henry, Sir John's son, and despite the generous arrangements for the relief of his difficulties which the Earl had made, Sir John began scheming to upset his brother's will on the plea that, owing to his devotion to Parliament, he had lost the estate which ought to have descended to him.

Though he did not succeed in ousting his sisters, Lady Gargrave and Lady Osborne, from the estates which the Earl had bequeathed to them, he obtained a grant of that portion of the fine which the Sequestrators imposed upon Lady Gargrave, besides other benefits from the Earl's estate. Finally, despised by his relatives and disowned by Cromwell, he was obliged to flee

the country, under suspicion of having plotted against the life of Cromwell, suffered to return to England. He spent his last days at Chelsea, where he died April 16, 1655. Bates, the Royalist historian of the regicides, asserts that in Sir John's latter days he came under the influence of Dr. Fuller, who often preached at Chelsea, and that before his death Fuller brought him to repentance for his political action in the past.

His body was removed to Dauntsey, and, as the church register testifies, was buried there April 28th; but the exact place of his burial is unknown. On the Restoration, Sir John's name was excepted from the Bill of Indemnity, and his estates were forfeited to the Crown; but were subsequently restored to his heirs, no doubt because of the loyalty of many members of his family, who, like his brother, the Earl of Danby, suffered heavily on that account. Sir John's will was made in July, 1654, and was proved by his widow, Grace Danvers, his sole executor, in June, 1655.

John, son of Sir John Danvers by his third wife, Grace Hewes, was of four sons the only one who survived his father. Born on the 10th August 1650, he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, in the year 1666, and appears to have been entered at Lincoln's Inn the same year. He obtained by petition a portion of his father's estates which had been confiscated, and held office for some years as a Commissioner of Revenue. Accumulating considerable wealth, he was able to indulge a taste which he had inherited for building and gardening. He added greatly to the old manor house at Prestcote, and especially a room, which was apparently built to receive the magnificent oak panelling which he bought out of Warkworth House. His arms and initials appear over the present entrance of the house, above the fireplace of the room just mentioned, and in other places about the house and grounds. John Danvers married Elizabeth Morewood, widow of Samuel Danvers, Esq., of Swithland, and at his death left his estates to her sons, the Danvers of Swithland by her first husband.

He died on the 21st of July 1721 and, according to directions given in his will, was buried in the south aisle of St Mary's Church Cropredy, Oxfordshire. A monument to his memory was placed on the neighbouring wall. The gravestone remains in situ, but the monument has been removed to the north wall of the church. The epitaph sets forth his lineage, marriage and age, and states that he served with honour and integrity in the reigns of King William, Queen Anne, and King George. John Danvers' will was made in October, 1720, and proved in August of the following year.

Evidently John Danvers was proud of his name and lineage, for he caused

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Direct Descendants of Henry Danvers

Henry Danvers Anne Coke
 Born: 08 July Born: 1619
 1622 = Married: 18
 Died: 1687 March 1644
 Died: 1686

John Danvers Born: 02 January 1645 Died: Infant 1647	Elizabeth Danvers Born: 22 November 1647	Mary Danvers Born: 15 October 1649 Died: Infant	Samuel Danvers Born: 06 September 1652 Died: 04 December 1693	Elizabeth Morewood Born: Abt. 1665 = Married: 20 December 1683 Died: 11 December 1719	Mercy Danvers Born: 10 September 1654 Died: 05 January 1706	Ann Danvers Born: 29 August 1661	William Danvers Born: 23 July 1666 Died: 13 December 1740
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Elizabeth Danvers Born: 13 October 1684 Died: 30 January 1742	Samuel Danvers Born: 31 October 1685 Died: 03 October 1708	Henry Danvers Born: 19 November 1686 Died: 01 October 1708	Joseph Danvers Born: 24 December 1687 Died: 26 October 1753	Frances Babington Born: 21 July 1694 = Married: 07 December 1721 Died: 04 February 1759	Ann Danvers Born: 12 January 1689 Died: 19 February 1765	Mary Danvers Born: 05 November 1690 Died: 19 April 1711	John Danvers Born: 11 November 1691 Died: 15 September 1741	Eleanor Danvers Born: 02 January 1693 Died: October 1758	Francis Danvers Born: 1694 Died: December 1697
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Frances Danvers Born: 22 October 1722 Died: 15 April 1724	John Danvers Born: 14 November 1723 Died: 21 September 1796	Katherine Danvers Born: 08 January 1724 Died: 13 November 1810	Lucy Danvers Born: 08 March 1726 Died: 1799	Frances Danvers Born: 12 April 1730 Died: 20 March 1740
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the latter to be inscribed upon his monument, and placed the family arms prominently in various places in his mansion. Moreover, he endeavoured by his will to keep the ancestral estate of Prestcote in the Danvers family. He leaves his manors of Prestcote and Chilton in Oxon, and of Basmey in Beds, with his lands in Prestcote, Cropredy, Basmey, Appleby, and elsewhere, to Joseph Danvers of Swithland, his wife's son by her first husband. Also with the Lordship of Prescote came several family heirlooms, most notably the picture of John Danvers' uncle the Earl of Danby (Sir Henry Danvers) in his Garter robes painted by Anthony van Dyck.

This brings us back very neatly to Swithland and to Samuel Danvers third eldest son Sir Joseph Danvers who not only inherited the Swithland estates but also those estates belonging to his stepfather John Danvers, as we have seen. Joseph's two older brothers, Samuel and Henry, pre-deceased their stepfather, John Danvers.

Joseph married Frances, the daughter of Thomas Babington of Rothley Temple on the 7th of December 1721 in St. Pauls, London. They had five children, four girls and one boy. The following paints an interesting picture of this unusual man:

Joseph Danvers was originally brought into Parliament by the Duke of Newcastle at the request of Lord Sunderland, who had been asked by the Duke of Rutland to find him a seat, apparently in return for his having stood down at the county election in favour of the Duke's brother, Lord William Manners. His subsequent seats were provided by the Government.

Danvers was a frequent speaker, belonging to the group of independent Members who supported Walpole, but sometimes went against him. In his first Parliament he spoke against the vote of credit on 12 April 1727, but in the debate of 3 July on the new King's civil list, after Shippen had pronounced. 'a funeral oration' on the ministry, Danvers foretold 'a resurrection of the just'. In the next Parliament he spoke for the Address in January 1729, but on 3 February he criticized Walpole's financial policy, maintaining that the sinking fund should be applied to the current service of the year, that the reduction of the interest on the national debt from 6 to 4 per cent "was a great cause of the present poverty and decay of trade by reducing spending power, and concluding that a debt at a high rate of interest was an advantage to the public"- notions which the House is said to have received "with that slight they deserved."

In the same session he spoke and voted against the Government on the civil list arrears. In 1730 he supported the Address, but was absent from the

division on the Hessians, and spoke against the Government on a bill for preventing loans to foreign powers without the King's permission. In 1731 he spoke for an opposition bill excluding pensioners from Parliament, declaring that 'it was certainly true that the country does believe we are a pensioned Parliament' and 'calls aloud for this bill'.

In 1732 he regretted that the King's speech contained nothing about reducing the army, for which he nevertheless voted. He also voted with the Government on the excise bill in 1733, and on the repeal of the Septennial Act in 1734. Thenceforth all his recorded votes and speeches on party issues were for the Government.

Edward Harley describes him in 1737 as a "dull joker." At the opening of the 1741 Parliament Horace Walpole quotes Danvers as, 'a rough rude beast, but now and then mouths out some humour', as saying that Sir Robert and Pulteney were like 'two old bawds debauching young Members'.

In the Cockpit list of October 1742 his political allegiance is indicated as Chelsea, i.e. Walpole. He continued to support the Government till the end of the Parliament, when he retired with a baronetcy.

Sir Joseph must have held Sir Robert Walpole, who later became the 1st Earl of Orford, in high regard, or owed him a great favour, as he presented him with the Van Dyck painting of the Earl of Danby. The painting had been commissioned by The Earl of Danby who bequeathed it to his nephew, John Danvers, who in his turn bequeathed it to Sir Joseph Danvers. The painting descended to the grandson of Walpole, the 3rd Earl of Orford, who sold it in 1779 as part of the Walpole collection to Catherine II (Catherine the Great) and it is now housed in the Hermitage Museum in Russia.

In 1742, a free school was founded by Sir Joseph Danvers. It was endowed with a house and garden and £4 per year for the master, who was expected to teach reading, writing and arithmetic to twelve poor boys, eight from Mountsorrel and four from Swithland each appointed by the Lord of the Manor. The master was also allowed to take in paying scholars, of whom there were usually about 30. The following inscription appears on the old school house:- "This English school for poor boys out of Mount Sorrell and Swithland, given by Joseph Danvers, Esq., 1742."

One of the most unusual and interesting items left to us by Sir Joseph was his tomb. According to an article written in the Daily Chronicle on the 21st of May 1925 regarding his tomb it stated the following:

"the most interesting thing in connection with Swithland however is the tombstone of Sir Joseph Danvers, who died nearly 200 years ago. It is

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The above portrait was taken from the sale catalogue of the contents of Swithland Hall in 1978. This painting by B. Dandridge is described in the catalogue as being of a gentleman holding an Act of Parliament and is dated 1750. We believe that this gentleman is Sir Joseph Danvers holding the letters patent which created him a Baronet. Further evidence is in the ancient Danvers coat of arms at the top of the painting which has a red hand in an escutcheon, the sign of a baronet, in the centre of the chevron.

probably the only tombstone in England where half the tomb is in the churchyard and half in unconsecrated ground. It is said that Sir Joseph told his son to bury him in this fashion, so that when the last trumpet sounded he should be able to arise on Judgement Day upon his own land."

This explanation was challenged as nothing more than a myth a week later in the Leicester Mail on the 30th of May 1925 under the heading of "A Curious Legend." The Mail quoted from Sir Joseph's will which gave precise details for his funeral:

"I desire that my body be deposited in the new vault in the churchyard of Swithland in a private manner in the forenoon, and that everyone of my tenants being housekeepers in Swithland at the time of my decease may be paid ten shillings, and also every such tenant and his wife who dwell at Swithland shall have a pair of black gloves each and walk at my funeral and that there may not be any more company."

However we much prefer the more colourful and touching explanation that is most often quoted regarding the construction of Sir Joseph's unusual tomb. Apparently he was extremely fond of his dog and his last wish was that he desired to be buried with his dog. As expected this must have caused a serious problem for the vicar as animals cannot be buried on consecrated ground. The answer which solved this unusual problem was for the tomb to be built over the wall of the graveyard so that Sir Joseph's dog could be buried on the un-consecrated ground behind the wall. Sir Joseph's tomb may be found straddling the eastern perimeter wall of the churchyard of Saint Leonard's in Swithland. On the tomb the following inscription can be seen, carved in the beautifully flowing script of John Hind on a slate slab hewn from the now defunct quarry nearby.

The Body of the Honourable Sir Joseph Danvers Bart, lies in this Tomb: He was born December 24th 1686. He died October 21st 1753. He was the Son of Samuel Danvers Esq. and Elisabeth Danvers, his Wife. He was a Member of Parliament many years, and one of the Deputy Lieutenants, and acting Justices of the Peace for this County. Also inscribed is the following epitaph relating to his wife Frances: The Body of Dame Frances Danvers, Wife of the Honourable Sir Joseph Danvers Bart, also lies in this Tomb. She was born July 21st 1694. She died February 4th 1759. She was the Daughter of Thomas Babington Esq. and Margaret Babington, his Wife of Rothley Temple in this County.

On two sides of the tomb are large slabs of blue Swithland slate. One is engraved with a ship in full sail and a church below a hill. With this pictorial

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The grave of Sir Joseph Danvers in the churchyard of St. Leonard's Church, Swithland, showing the tomb breaching the wall to allow his dog to be buried.

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illustration is the accompanying text: - *When young I sailed to India, east and west, But aged in this port must lye at rest.* The other engraved slab depicts the ploughing of a field and the building of a house, illustrating the lines:- *Be cheerful, O man, and labour to live The merciful God a blessing will give.*

Of the five children that Sir Joseph and his wife Frances had, only three survived his death. The eldest daughter, Frances, died an infant, the youngest also named Frances died in her tenth year. Of the three remaining children it is worth mentioning the two sisters Katherine and Lucy. Katherine married Lancelot Lee of Colton Hall, Shropshire who was four years younger than Katherine. When Katherine died aged 86 the following moving epitaph was written about her life in the Gentleman's Magazine dated 13th of November 1810. *Died at Thornley Place near Worcester in her 87th year Catherine Lee relict of the late Lancelot Lee of Coton Hall, Salop. She was a woman whose mind was entirely directed by vital religion. She was unwearied in her endeavours to promote the welfare of her fellow creatures, and to adorn the doctorines of God her saviour in all things, but, amidst all her beneficence. she preserved a consiousness of her own defects, which rendered her an eminent instance of exemplary humility.*

Katherine's younger sister Lucy married John Grey of Enville Hall, in Staffordshire. John Grey was brother to Harry Grey, The Earl of Stamford. Sir Joseph Danvers' only son John inherited the Swithland estates when he was 30 years old. He was born in Swithland on the 14th of November 1723. He married Mary Watson, the daughter of Joel Watson a London merchant, on the 9th of October 1752. They had six children, Mary, Susanna, John, Joseph, William and Henry. Sadly Susanna, Joseph, William and Henry all died before or around their second birthdays. The eldest son John died at the age of eighteen leaving the eldest daughter Mary as the only surviving child at the death of Sir John Danvers. It was this tragic series of deaths that would eventually lead to the highly contentious issue over who was the rightful heir to the Danvers estates after the death of Sir John Danvers, which will be discussed in the next chapter on the Danvers family of Shepshed.

Sir John Danvers was a highly eccentric and a very colourful character, quite literally, according to this quotation from Gardiner:

“Sir John Danvers was a man of sound common sense, though in some things highly eccentric. He was remarkably fond, like the Chinese, of painting everything red, so much so that every door, window shutter, and gatepost in his town of Swithland and Mountsorrel were so decorated. He did not stop

there, he adopted it in his own dress but the glaring effect of red was tempered with a mixture of black. If I remember right, his coat was of a dull scarlet, with black buttons, black waistcoat and small clothes red buttons and red stockings. Being a thick broad set man, his appearance was like that of the knave of spades. One of his singularities was that no coal should be used in his house: and in every corner of the mansion were piled up short billets cut from the neighbouring woods. Whenever he appeared abroad it was in a sort of stage-coach richly emblazoned with his arms, and when at home a flag was kept flying on the highest turret.”

More evidence of Sir John's character is revealed in a letter which Edward Dawson wrote to the Earl of Huntingdon in 1771 that -

Sir John Danvers is a very active Justice of the Peace and though he has the character of being a very old man he is certainly nonetheless a very useful one as a magistrate, being the terror of all poachers, pond robbers and wood stealers. In the article of wood stealing, I have had very good instance of this attention to your Lordships interest in Charnwood Forest where the people are far from being taught that your Lordship's property is not common.

Although Sir John owned a good library, he would say that a gentleman's library was complete if it consisted of four books only, the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, Don Quixote and the Court Calendar.

In 1793 Sir John built the Butter Market in Mountsorrel; a neo-classical rotunda of eight Tuscan columns supporting a low stepped dome surmounted by an urn. It was built in response to the outrage the villagers expressed when Sir John removed the ancient 15th century lantern cross, which had stood in the market place for centuries, and had it erected in the parkland of his Manor House at Swithland. Sir John was so anxious to be remembered after his death that he had his tomb and inscription made whilst he was still alive hence the unusual way of recording the date of his death as being about the 18th Century, as we may see from the inscription below. (See page 98)

THE BODY OF

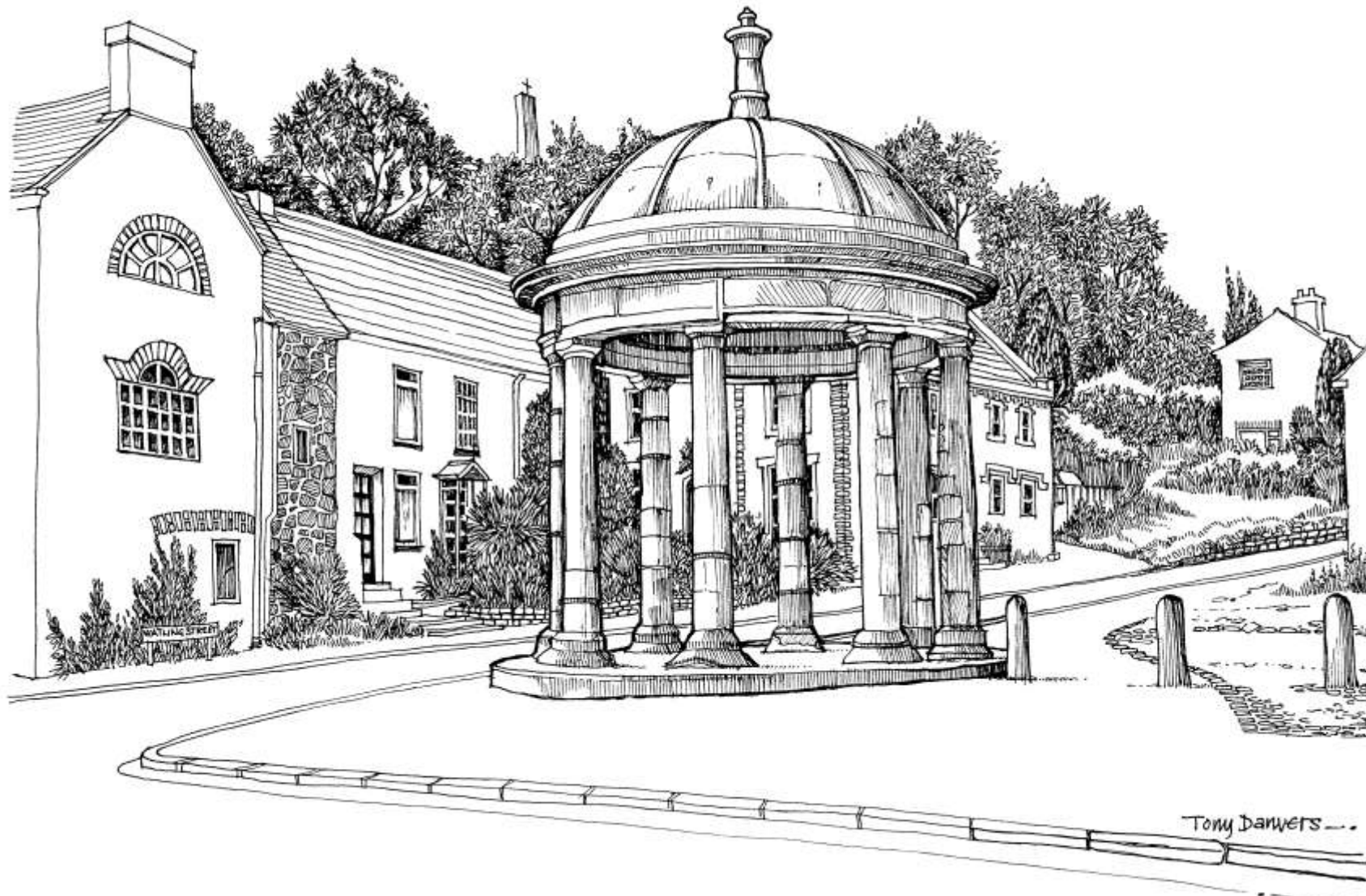
SIR JOHN DANVERS, BART^T.

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ABOUT THE XVIIITH CENTURY

WAS DEPOSITED UNDER THIS SMALL BLUE STONE

AT THE FOOT OF THIS MONUMENT.

HE WAS THE ONLY SON OF SIR JOSEPH DANVERS, BART., BY FRANCES, HIS WIFE, DAUGHTER OF THOMAS BABINGTON OF ROTHLEY TEMPLE, IN THIS COUNTY, ESQ. SIR JOSEPH WAS THE



The Butter Market, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire.

The Butter Market stands on the site originally occupied by an ancient 15th century market cross. Sir John Danvers had the present rotunda built in 1793 to replace the old cross which he had removed and placed in the parkland of his Manor House at Swithland where it still stands to this day. Sir John was one of the most colourful characters of his time. He was obsessed by the colour red, every window, door, shutter and gatepost in Swithland had to be painted red. It also affected his sense of dress and being a rather large broadset man he looked, according to contemporary records, rather like the knave of hearts.

SON OF SAMUEL DANVERS ESQ. BY ELIZABETH MOREWOOD, AN HEIRESS OF OVERTON IN THE COUNTY OF DERBY, WHO SURVIVING HER HUSBAND MARRIED JOHN DANVERS OF PRESCOT MANOR IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORD, ESQ., THE ONLY SON AND HEIR OF SIR JOHN DANVERS OF WHICHWOOD FOREST IN THE SAID COUNTY, KNIGHT. SIR JOHN WAS THE ONLY BROTHER AND HEIR OF HENRY DANVERS (EARL OF DANBY) A GENERAL OFFICER AND KNIGHT OF THE GARTER, FOUNDER OF THE PHYSICK GARDEN AT OXFORD, A FAST FRIEND OF CHARLES THE FIRST, IN WHOSE REIGN AND SERVICE HE DIED WITHOUT ISSUE. THESE TWO BROTHERS WERE SONS OF SIR JOHN DANVERS, KNIGHT BY ELIZABETH DAUGHTER OF JOHN NEVIL (LORD LATIMER) SON-IN-LAW OF QUEEN CATHERINE PARR. THE EARL WAS THE FRIEND OF THE KING, BUT SIR JOHN WAS THE FRIEND OF THE CONSTITUTION, AND IN THE VIOLENT STRUGGLES WHICH ENSUED, SIDED WITH THAT BAND OF PATRIOTS, WHO THOUGHT LIBERTY COULD NOT BE TOO DEARLY BOUGHT, THOUGH AT THE EXPENSE OF ROYAL BLOOD. HIS DEATH, HAPPENING BEFORE THE RESTORATION, SHELTER'D HIM FROM PROSECUTION, BUT HIS SON, WHO WAS AN INFANT, WHEN THE KING WAS BEHEADED, SAW THAT HIS PATERNAL ESTATES, TO THE AMOUNT OF TEN THOUSAND A YEAR IN THE COUNTIES OF OXFORD AND WILTS, IN THE HANDS OF STRANGERS. THE SMALL PORTION OF HIS PATRIMONY, WHICH ESCAPED THE RAPACITY OF THE COURT, THAT SON OF SIR JOHN LEFT TO SIR JOSEPH DANVERS FOR LIFE, AND SIR JOHN IN TAIL. HE WAS HAPPY IN HIS CHOICE. SIR JOSEPH WAS AN ABLE SUPPORTER OF THE PROTESTANT CAUSE. HE WAS IN PARLIAMENT NEAR THIRTY YEARS. IN THE REIGN OF GEORGE THE SECOND, WAS A DEPUTY LIEUTENANT, AND ACTING JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, FOR THE COUNTY, AND WITH HIS WIFE, LIES BURIED IN A TOMB, IN THIS CHURCHYARD. SIR JOHN HIS SON THOUGHT PROPER, TO TREAD IN THE STEPS OF HIS PROTESTANT ANCESTORS, AND SEIZED EVERY OPPORTUNITY OF SHEWING HIS ATTACHMENT TO THEIR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL PRINCIPLES. HIS BOUNTY BEAUTIFY'D THIS CHURCH, AND REBUILT THE PARSONAGE. IN ALL POLITICAL CONTESTS, HE UNIFORMLY GAVE HIS SUPPORT, TO THE FRIENDS OF THE PROTESTANT INTEREST, AND

ASSERTORS OF REVOLUTION PRINCIPLES, DEEMING THEM IN CONJUNCTION, THE BEST PLEDGES AND SECURITIES FOR HIS TEMPORAL WELFARE, AND ETERNAL HAPPINESS. (See page 98.)

Sir John died on the 21st of September 1796. His death was recorded in the Leicester Journal dated 30th September 1796: "*Sir John Danvers, Bart. died on Wednesday night at his lodgings on the South Parade, Bath, after a long illness. Sir John Danvers, Bart. of Swithland in the County of Leicester, aged 75 years. His estates real and personal are devolved by will to his daughter the Honourable Mrs. Butler-Danvers at her decease to her husband the Hon. Augustus Butler-Danvers second son of the Countess of Lanesborough and in remainder to their only son, now an infant. The real estates in this and other counties amount in old rents to near £10,000 per annum, in which the property of timber is immense. The personal estate consists of near £200,000. By a former Will the family of the male branches of the Danvers were made sole heirs but was lately revoked soon after the birth of his daughter's son*"

It was this sudden revoking of the will which would later cause questions to be raised concerning the legitimacy of the Will and led to William Danvers the great, great grandson of Henry Danvers of Swithland taking action over this issue.

Sir John's only surviving child Mary was born on the 13th of February 1753. She married Augustus Richard Butler Danvers on the 8th of March 1792 when she was 39 years old, interestingly Augustus was only 21 years old! Augustus was the second son of Brinsley Butler, the second Earl of Lanesborough and Jane Rochart. He assumed the names and arms of the Danvers family - "*to him and his heirs by Royal sign on the 14th September 1796.*" The Twells collection contains a true copy taken from the Registry of Marriages in the parish of St. Giles in the Fields London dated the 10th of November 1829:- "*Augustus Richard Butler of this parish and Mary Danvers of this parish were married in this church by Banns March 27th in the year 1792 by Richard Southgate, curate. This marriage was solemnised between Augustus R Butler and Mary Danvers in the presence of John King and Joseph Geo. Holman.*"

Four years later Mary inherited the Swithland estates from her father. Much of what we know about the life of this unfortunate lady is the subject of a great deal of conjecture and hearsay and until any further evidence comes to light we have to rely on rumour and the evidence of some of the servants who worked at Swithland Hall, much of which is conflicting in its

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Descendants of Joseph Danvers

Joseph Danvers
 Born: 24
 December 1687
 Died: 26 October
 1753 =
 Frances
 Babington
 Born: 21 July
 1694
 Married: 07
 December 1721
 Died: 04 February
 1759

Frances Danvers Born: 22 October 1722 Died: 15 April 1724	John Danvers Born: 14 November 1723 Died: 21 September 1796	Mary Watson Born: 02 August 1721 Married: 09 October 1752 Died: 17 September 1800	Katherine Danvers Born: 08 January 1724 Died: 13 November 1810	Lancelot Lee Born: 1719 Married: 08 July 1761 Died: 16 July 1775	Lucy Danvers Born: 08 March 1726 Died: 1799	John Grey Born: 1724 Married: 26 May 1748 Died: 25 February 1777	Frances Danvers Born: 12 April 1730 Died: 20 March 1740
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Mary Danvers Born: 13 February 1753 Died: 11 May 1802 =	Augustus Richard Butler Danvers Born: 10 July 1771 Married: 08 March 1792 Died: 26 April 1820	Susanna Danvers Born: 12 February 1754 Died: Infant	John Watson Danvers Born: 02 April 1755 Died: 29 December 1768	Joseph Danvers Born: 08 July 1756 Died: 17 October 1756	Henry Danvers Born: 07 August 1757 Died: 13 April 1759	William Danvers Born: 10 July 1760 Died: 18 April 1762
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George Augustus Butler- Danvers Born: 05 August 1793 Died: 1798	Frances Arabella Freemantle Married: 29 August 1815 Died: 05 October 1850	George John Danvers Butler- Danvers Born: 06 December 1794 Died: 07 July 1866	Frederica Emma Bishop Born: 13 February 1808 Married: 24 November 1851 Died: 03 October 1870
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Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

detail. It is difficult to ascertain whether Mary had one or two sons or none at all. According to the Sir John Danvers' Estate papers she had a child born prior to her marriage to Augustus and that Augustus immediately threw her out when he found out. The child was living with Miss Elizabeth Sturt, who was the mistress of Augustus, when he died. There are question marks as to whether or not he was actually murdered. He is said to have had a twisted foot and was about 5 years old when he died. There are suggestions that he may have been murdered by being smothered. This was supposed to have occurred about 1801. Augustus Richard Butler Danvers lived with Miss Sturt at Swithland whilst Mary lived in London. He later married Miss Sturt on the 17th of May 1802 the day Mary Danvers was buried!

Other sources say Mary never had any children either before or after her marriage to Augustus, and that the child with the twisted foot was brought over from Ireland by a servant of Augustus Richard Butler. This child died or was murdered and it is said that the child brought forward to claim the inheritance was a substitute arranged by Augustus.

Additional material from several witness statements inform us that Mary Danvers had a child before her marriage and it suffered with a twisted foot and a bad knee. Contrary to this it was also said that Mary never had any children with her husband and that Augustus kept Miss Elizabeth Sturt as his lover at Swithland whilst Mary was in London. The child of Mary died or was murdered and another child substituted by Augustus. This child having been brought to Swithland Hall wrapped as a parcel, is how it is described in the witness statements.

Much of the above details are hearsay and conjecture and as such may be ignored for the moment but we will be returning to this matter when we come to the chapter on the Shepshed Danvers. Augustus and Miss Sturt had at least 2 sons and a daughter, prior to their marriage. So we have very many conflicting stories regarding the issue of Mary Danvers and Augustus Richard Butler, who later changed his name to Butler Danvers.

The Sir John Danvers Estate papers contain many depositions relating to the supposed illegal actions of Augustus Butler in his successful attempt to gain possession of the very valuable Danvers lands and estates. Included amongst these are the allegations that some of the Swithland and Shepshed registers were either altered or removed and disposed of. They allege that Augustus Butler Danvers should not have inherited the Danvers lands but that it should have gone to William Danvers living in Shepshed who claimed himself heir-in-tail male of the estates of Sir John and who was well known

to Sir John Danvers as his cousin. Some also infer that Mary Danvers herself went to the lawyers, Whattons of Loughborough and that Whatton himself went to Bath and drew up a new will. Another states that Mary was actually present when the old will was burned and that Augustus gave her a bond for £20,000 and a house in Piccadilly late the property of Lord Barramore. Several suggest that the original will named the Shepshed Danvers as heirs and suggest that Mary had been previously married to a Mr. Delaval. From our own records, however, we believe Mary was a spinster at the time of her marriage to Augustus. We will be discussing some of these depositions and other issues relating to the will of Sir John Danvers in the next chapter.

Mary and Augustus separated on the 29th May 1797. Mary had custody of their son until the age of 8 with Augustus having access. Augustus agreed to let Mary live apart as a single woman and would not sue for her assets which she had received from her father and which she could live by with an annuity of £500 per year. Also Augustus would have sole use of Swithland, Leicestershire and Mary would not be held accountable for any of his debts. An Indenture, dated the 3rd of May 1799 [ROLLR 3D/42/54/82] lists the lands Mary inherited from her father and the ones Augustus sold prior to their separation. Mary died on the 11th May 1802 and was buried at Bunhill Fields on a Monday at 12 noon on the 17th of May 1802.

At this point in our narrative we can only report the facts as we know them regarding the descendants of Mary Danvers and Augustus Richard Butler Danvers. On the family tree on page 44 we have recorded the first child of the marriage between Mary and Augustus as being George Augustus Butler-Danvers who was born on the 5th of August 1793. He died five years later in 1798. We also have a second son, George John Danvers Butler-Danvers, recorded on the family tree who was born on the 6th of December 1794. George married Frances Arabella Freemantle, the daughter of Colonel Stephen Francis William Freemantle on the 29th of August 1815. She died on October the 5th in the year 1850 and was buried in St Anne's Church in Dublin. A year later George married his second wife Frederica Emma Bishop, the daughter of Charles Bishop, on the 24th November 1851.

As we have no record of there being any issue from either of these marriages, it means that the death of George Augustus Butler-Danvers marked the end of the Swithland Branch of the Danvers family after a period of 400 years. The estates were now firmly in the hands of the Lanesborough family in spite of everything the Shepshed Danvers tried to do to regain the Swithland Estates as will be outlined in the next chapter.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Notes on Chapter Four

The Fifth Monarchists

The "Fifth Monarchy" or "Fifth Kingdom" refers to an interpretation of prophecies in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation. Four kingdoms or eras in history (the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman Empires) would be followed by the Fifth Kingdom. This last Kingdom, they concluded, would be established by the returning Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords to reign with his saints on earth for a thousand years. For the saints to prevail, the old order should be overthrown by violence. Fifth Monarchists regarded the civil wars and the beheading of King Charles 1st in 1649 as a necessary prelude to the Millennium. Fifth Monarchism suffered a major setback in 1660 when the monarchy was restored. All their prophecies had been proved wrong. The movement died quickly with a brief finale in 1661. Effectively therefore, the history of Fifth Monarchism is confined to the years 1649-1660.

The Twells Collection.

Refers to a set of documents that were found under the bed of an aunt of the Twells family after she had died. Realising their historic importance the Twells family took the papers to the Derby Record Office. However they were not interested in them as they bore no reference to Derby families. The family then decided to take them to the Leicestershire Record Office who looked at them and noticed the Danvers name. They like the Derby RO were not interested in the papers but informed them that they knew a person who was researching the Danvers family. So the Twells family left a contact number for one of our researchers to reach them. Our researcher then got in touch with them and borrowed the papers to copy. The Twells papers are a source of great importance as they show the huge amount of research which was done to try to regain the Swithland estates. They contain detailed family histories of most if not all the Danvers families in England and letters written at that time. Who wrote them is not known but Elizabeth Stanfield might well be the author.



A 15th Century Knight in the Armour and Surcoat of the Danvers Family

CHAPTER FIVE

Shepshed 1666 - 1849

Quoting directly from Nichols' book on the history of Leicester volume III part 2 page 1011 we read the following: *'Anciently called Schepeshede or Schepesheved, a very considerable village, containing many more houses and inhabitants than any other village in the county, is situated 10 miles from Leicester, and 4 from Loughborough. The parish is 6 miles in length, and 3½ in breadth; bounded on the South by Whitwick and Beaumanor; on the East by Garendon, on the North by Hathern and Long Whatton and on the West by Belton and Gracedieu. In the ecclesiastical division of the county, it is within the deanery of Akeley.*

At the time of the general survey, Gouvin held of the king in fee two hides and a half in Scepesheved, and four ploughlands; which he found waste, and which Ofgot had held with sac and soc. He had two plough-lands in demesne, and two bondmen; and thirty villans with twelve borders, and fifteen ploughs; and twenty socmen, with two knights and six villains, and four bordars, and twenty-one ploughs There were fifty acres of meadow; a wood a mile long and four furlongs broad, and a mill of five shillings value.

Out of this land six pounds were paid, by order of the Bishop of Baieux, for the service of the Isle of Wight. Alwin at the time of the survey, claimed the fee of out plough land, affirming that it belonged to the king's fee in Shepeshede.'

It has already been seen that Shepshed was in existence at the time of the Domesday Survey, but there is very little evidence as to its beginnings. It has two of the oldest roads in the country, Ring Fence (the old southern boundary of the town) and Sullington Road, an ancient British track named after the goddess Solina. The Domesday Book itself is evidence that Shepshed had been in existence for some time - for it was quite a large place - and the Survey itself states that Shepshed was "found waste", but had recovered by the year the survey was taken.

There is much controversy about the origin of the name of the town. The earliest form is Scepeshefde Regis, and then came Schepeshede, Sheyshed, Schepished, Sepshed, Shepshed, Sheepshead, and finally a return to Shepshed. The naive way of explanation would be to say that it came from a "Sheep's Head", but this has not satisfied most historians. Some have seen in the name the idea that at the place a sacrifice of a sheep was made at one

time: others, noting the ending "sheved" in one of the examples above, have connected it with a word meaning "thatched" in medieval English-French: but most believe that the earliest origin comes from a word meaning simply "hill where sheep graze". Which brings us neatly to the first of the Danvers family to live in Shepshed.

According to our researches, it was to Blackbrook farm on the outskirts of Shepshed that William Danvers, the youngest son of Henry Danvers and Ann Coke, of Swithland came to work as a sheep minder. We have no record of the reason why William should choose to do this type of work. By any standards of the period it was an extremely unusual choice of career for the son of a very well respected and wealthy family.

In 1660 his father Henry transferred his lands to trustees, so that they were safe from the crown. On his death in 1687 we must assume that they passed to his oldest living son Samuel. So it is probable that William found himself penniless after his father's death, receiving nothing from his parents. Therefore he would have to find a suitable occupation, normally this would be in the army or the church which were the favoured occupations for the younger sons of rich parents. In this case with Henry's record as a potential trouble maker it is unlikely that William would follow in his father's footsteps, hence him becoming a sheep minder at Blackbrook Farm.

There is a clue, as to a possible reason why this came about, recorded in "The Estates of the Late Sir John Danvers Baronet of Swithland," compiled and written by Charles William Danvers. William is described as *"being of dissipated and improvident habits and became reduced in circumstances."* Which being the son of the very religious and high minded Henry Danvers, as we have seen in the previous chapter, we can imagine his behaviour would not be tolerated for very long and it isn't too far fetched to believe that having spent all his allowance he was quite literally thrown out of the family home to find his own salvation.

Interestingly these same papers state that William rented a small farm from a Mr. Chester which was situated opposite to the old windmill. This same farm is still known as Chester's Farm. This is different from our own research as previously noted. It may be possible that he started by earning his living as a shepherd at Blackbrook farm then later renting the Chester Farm, or indeed the opposite situation may be true.

A more accurate record of William's beginnings in Shepshed may be seen in a deposition given by William's grandson Richard not long before he died. It states the following:-

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Richard Danvers baptized 1738 says that his grandfather was Uncle to Sir Joseph and brother to Samuel, that he (William) was born at and came to Sheepshead as a young man and bought a flock of sheep - Deponent (Richard) often went with his father to Sir Joseph's at Swithland who gave his father yellow shillings (guineas) his father once left him in the church yard, when Sir Joseph came up and asked, whose boy are you? He replied, Richard Danvers, Sir Joseph took him to the Hall and quarrelled with his father for leaving the boy, not ashamed of him, he was not.

William Danvers was born on the 23rd of July 1666 and married Ellen Lacey on the 8th of August 1703. William was 37 years of age and Ellen, the blushing bride, was only twenty years old at the time. Interestingly in the parish record of this marriage he is described as being a day labourer. They had two sons, Richard and John. Their first son Richard was born only seven months after their marriage on the 5th of February 1704. Which would imply that for all his other faults William did the decent thing by marrying her. The second son, John, died as an infant and there were no other known offspring of this marriage. Ellen was only 48 years old when she died on the 21st of September 1732. On the parish record of Richard's birth William Danvers is also described as a day labourer which is a term often used to describe the lowest form of work. So William could not have sunk any lower after being born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth.

William's son Richard however was totally different in character to his father and "The apprentices of Great Britain" show *Richard son William Danvers of Shepshed apprenticed to John Swaine Jnr. Frame Work Knitter for the fee of £6, for the term of seven years, document IR1/45/83 dated 26.3.1718.* Richard must have been given a very good education, most likely from his father who would of course have been a very literate man as the son of the lord of the Manor, as Richard later became a schoolmaster and was a witness, and an overseer, to many of the wills made in Shepshed, and beyond, between 1737 and 1757.

This is an important point as it would have been highly unusual for the child of a day labourer to be so well educated and emphasises for us the fact that William Danvers was truly the son of Henry Danvers in spite of what one of the Butler family did later to try to disprove this by allegedly trying to destroy all evidence of his birth. Richard married Elizabeth Cave on the 26th of December 1732 and had four children, namely William, Helen, Richard and John. Richard, their father, died on the 10th October 1757 aged 52.

His wife Elizabeth, who had already been a widow prior to her marriage



A carving of a sheep's head to be found in St. Botolph's church, Shepshed

to Richard, died at the grand old age of 90 years and was buried on the 12th of January 1791 but in her case it wasn't so grand sadly, as she is recorded as being a pauper. Her previous marriage had been to William Leaptrap and we

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Blackbrook Farm, where William Danvers is said to have been a keeper of sheep, situated on the outskirts of Shepshed on the A512 towards Ashby de la Zouch

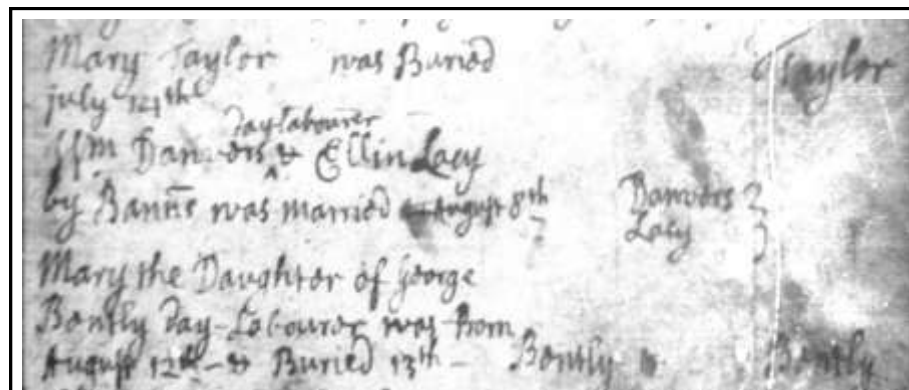
Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

have a settlement certificate dated 11th of September 1724 which mentions William Leaptrap, Elizabeth his wife and family but so far we have found no trace of any issue of this marriage.

The eldest son of Richard and Elizabeth, William, was born on the 26th of December 1733 and married his wife Helen Walker on the 12th of September 1757. They had two children, William and Richard. We shall return to the elder son William later as he was a very prominent figure in the fortunes of the Shepshed Danvers family (see page 53). Sadly William, the elder, died on the 6th of May 1761 when only 28 years of age. His wife Helen being only 21 years old was left a widow to bring up two children so it was only natural for her to want to remarry. This she did three years later when she met and married a Mr. Swift Foxon and went on to have 8 more children by him. William and Helen's youngest son Richard never married as far as we know and on his death in 1810 the following Inland revenue Estate duty form IR/26/376 Folio 71 dated 27.9.1810 states. *Richard Danvers of Shepshed framework knitter, executor Swift Foxon.* His estate went to Ann Gadd the daughter of Thomas Gadd of Shepshed. Ann Gadd was the daughter of his half sister Mary Foxon who married Thomas Gadd. Mary was the daughter of Helen Danvers nee Walker and her second husband Swift Foxon.

Richard and Elizabeth's second eldest, a daughter named Helen, was born on the 16th of January 1735. She married Samuel Port on the 19th of September 1759. It couldn't have been an easy marriage for Helen as she was constantly in debt due to her husband's fondness for drink. It is possibly through her husband's habit that Helen became a frequent visitor to Swithland Hall in order to see Sir John Danvers. Sir John regarded Helen as part of the family and often gave her presents. Her husband Samuel Port was a man addicted to drinking, as we have noted, and often spent all their money on drink. Here again Sir John would come to the rescue with provisions and money. Sir John also bought a framework knitting machine for Samuel Port so that he might earn a decent living for himself and his wife. Although as Samuel remarked at the time, rather ungraciously, that he would rather have had the money!

This frame was brought to Rothley where they lived. Then after Samuel Port's death in 1780 the frame was kept by a Mr. Joseph Newbold until Samuel's son was old enough to have it. This was because Helen had died the year before her husband leaving seven daughters and one son, John, who was only three years of age at the time of her death. Interestingly Helen often



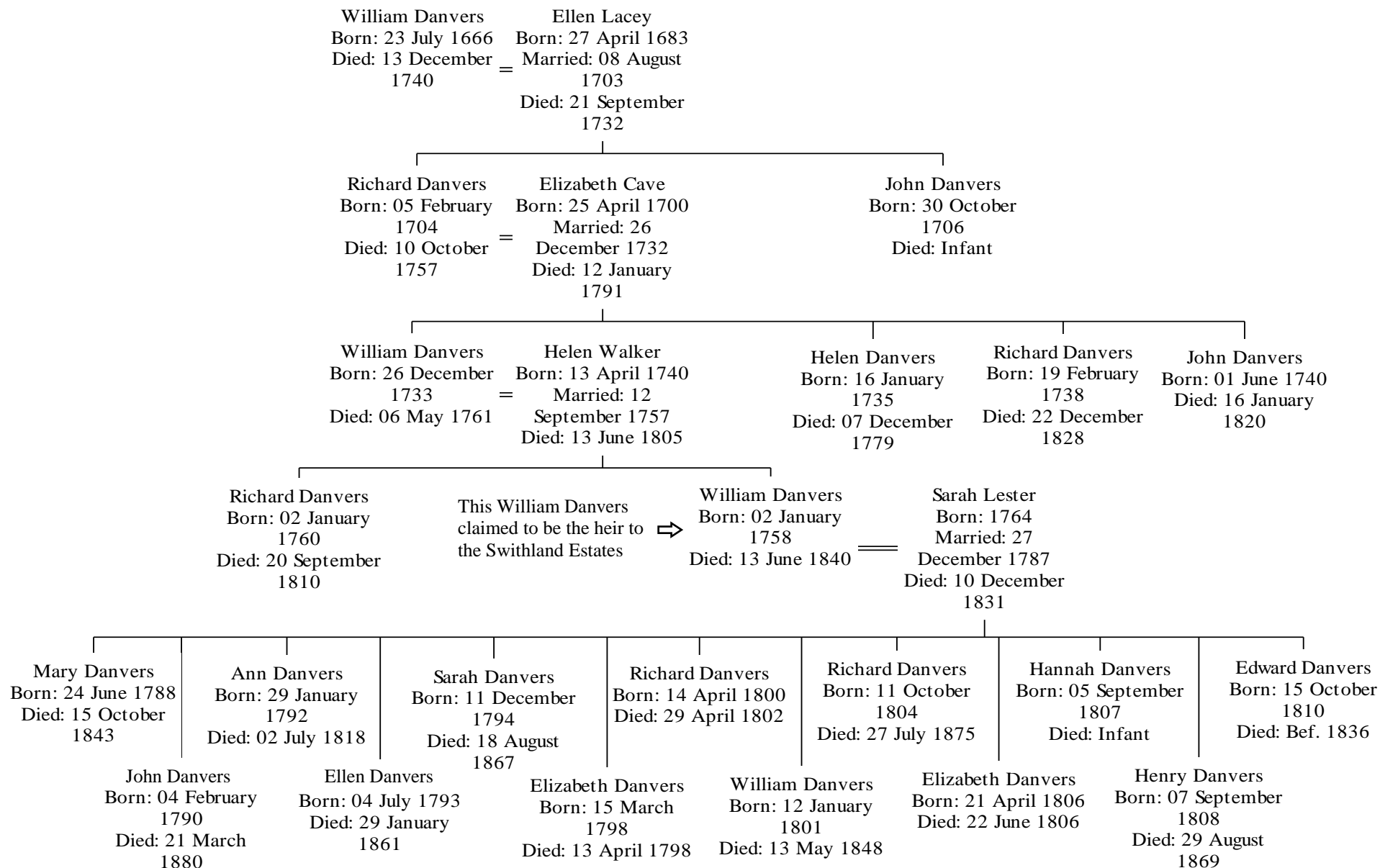
Extract taken from the Shepshed Parish records showing the marriage of William Danvers, day labourer, and Ellen Lacy on the 8th of August 1703. ROLLR DES10/2

referred to Sir John Danvers as 'her cousin of Swithland Hall.' The above is clarified in a deposition dated October 20th 1829 made by John Smith, a neighbour to Helen Danvers. *John Smith aged 65 years recollects Helen Danvers who was married to Samuel Port of Rothley and lived next Door to the Deponent. He well recollects that the said Helen Port frequently went over to Sir John Danvers, Bart, who acknowledged her as part of his own family and always made her presents. The said Samuel Port was a man addicted to drinking, and after he had been out drinking until he had spent all he had, he had recourse to Sir John, through the medium of his wife, to supply the wants of the family. He, Sir John, always gave her money when she went and frequently provision home with her. And once when the Deponent was in Samuel Port's house, she Helen Port returned from Sir John's and told her husband that Sir John was going to buy a frame for him to which he said he would rather have had the money. The Frame was bought, and came over to Rothley, to the said Samuel Ports, and after his death the moulds of the frame, as a security for the same, was kept by Mr. Joseph Newbold. until the son was capable of taking care of himself. The deponent (John Smith) further says, that he has been in the said Samuel Port's house, when Samuel Port has said to his wife, "Nell you must go and see your Cozen at Swithland," alluding to Sir John. And the children of Helen Port used frequently to say that they should have plenty of Money when their Cozen Sir John died.*

Richard was the third child of Richard and Elizabeth Danvers. He was born on the 19th of February 1738 and went on to marry Ann Wortley on the

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Direct Descendants of William Danvers



25th of December 1776. It was this Richard who attested to the fact that his grandfather was uncle to Sir Joseph and brother to Samuel, (see page 48). Richard and Ann had five children, four boys and one girl, namely, Hannah, Edward, Richard, Richard and John. Hannah was born on the 16th of May 1779 and died on the 12 August 1800, living only long enough to celebrate her 21st birthday. The eldest son Edward was baptised on the 21st of February 1781. When he reached the age of 26 he married Mary Broadhurst on the 6th of July 1807. He must have done well for himself as the 1823 Census of Shepshed shows Edward Danvers having a house and a shop. They went on to have eleven children, eight girls and three boys. Strangely three of the girls, who were all named Sarah, died before reaching two years of age.

Edward was buried on the 28 July 1835 just two years after the death of his youngest daughter Sarah. His wife Mary, who, with seven surviving children to look after, married Thomas Newbold only six months after her husband's death. He was a widower from Cole Orton, a needlemaker by profession. Thomas had six children from his first marriage to Elizabeth Ward. It must have been somewhat crowded with all their children to accommodate even in the days when large families were the norm. The remaining sons of Richard and Ann Danvers who were Richard, John and another Richard all died before reaching the age of eight.

John, the youngest son of Richard and Elizabeth Danvers, was baptised on the 1st of June 1740. He was 21 years old when he married Mary Moore the daughter of Thomas Moore on the 29th of June 1761. Mary gave birth to seven children Elizabeth, Mary, John, Thomas, two Sarahs and last of all William. The eldest daughter Elizabeth was born on the 16th of February 1848. She married Edward Lester on the 25th of December 1786. They had 9 children, three of whom died in infancy.

This brings us to one of the major problems when trying to record all the descendants of William and Ellen Danvers. By the time we come to the fourth generation there were 22 offspring to consider. It is almost impossible to record all the details of their lives and that of their descendants. So at this point in the narrative we must begin to focus on those lives which are either important to the main story of the Shepshed Danvers lineage or are of particular interest to us. This means that we will, rightly or wrongly, tend to dwell on the families of the eldest sons in the first instance.

However returning to the children of John Danvers and Mary Moore we do have an important piece of evidence regarding their eldest son John. John Danvers was born on the 8th of March 1765 in Shepshed. He was baptised

NOTICE.

I, WILLIAM DANVERS, of Sheepshead, in the County of Leicester; Framework-knitter, the Tenant-in-tail male of the Estates of Sir John Danvers, late of Swithland, in the said County, baronet, and also the heir-at-law of the said Sir John Danvers. Do hereby give Notice to all and each of the persons attending the sale of Oak Timber, Bark, and Underwood, to be held at the Griffin, in Swithland aforesaid, on the thirty-first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and forty, at two o'clock, not to buy any of the said Oak Timber, Bark, and Underwood, or any part thereof, or to remove or take away the same or any part thereof, as they and each of them will answer the same at their and each of their peril.

Witness my hand this twenty-fifth day of January, One Thousand

eight Hundred and forty.

William Danvers
X
Mark

Witness
Thomas Broadhurst

Notice issued by William Danvers regarding the sale of wood at the Griffin Inn

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

on the 26th of December 1771 also in Shepshed. He married Ann Manser on the 17th of April 1797 and they had seven children. John died on the 11th of December 1841 at the ripe old age of 77 years and was buried on the 16th of December 1841 in Holy Trinity Church, Hull, Yorkshire.

John was a soldier with the Leicester Militia when his son Richard was baptised at Yaxley. Richard was born at Norman Cross, which had no parish church, so the family attended the parish church of Yaxley. The Leicester Militia was stationed at Norman Cross where there was a prison housing over 7,000 French prisoners. Some time between 1798 and 1812, John left the military and relocated to Kingston upon Hull. His occupation at the time of Richard's apprenticeship was labourer.

On his death certificate his occupation was given as a coal porter. Elizabeth Horley, who made her mark, was present at his death. The location is given as Butchers Arms Yard. In the Gentleman's Magazine for the first quarter of 1842, John's death is noted with the following statement, "*cousin of Sir John Danvers, Bart*". This is another important detail which adds to the weight of evidence that William Danvers was indeed the son of Henry Danvers and was duly recognised as such by his descendants; in this case his great grandson John Danvers.

We have already noted that John Danvers and Ann Manser had a son Richard who was born at Norman Cross on the 14th of April 1798. Richard was a Mariner. He was apprenticed to John Gilder, a ship owner, on the 10th of February 1812 for 7 years. In 1835 seamen in England were required to register and obtain a ticket. Richard's ticket number was 573. Between the years 1835 and 1844 he served on the following vessels all sailing out of Hull: the Rosetta, Ross, Coulham, Porteus, Brunswick, Eagle, Robin Hood and Dagger. In 1845 seamen were required to re-register and the system changed. That register listed the exact date and place of birth, but the names of the ships on which the seaman served were no longer listed, just the number of the port from which the ship sailed. Hull was Port 52.

Apart from this Richard, John and Ann had six other children. The eldest was Elizabeth Manser born on the 21st of October 1787 who we shall be returning to later as she plays an important role in the affairs of the Shepshed family. Elizabeth married William Stanfield on the 7th of February 1819. They had no children. Of the remaining five, Mary born on the 5th of June 1800 married three times. Three of her siblings John, Ann and John all died young and another Ann only lived to be 17 years of age. So out of seven offspring only three children survived into adulthood.

Returning to the family of William Danvers and Helen Walker we now come to their oldest son also named William. William was born on the 2nd of January 1758. He married Sarah Lester on the 27th of December 1787. They had 13 children seven girls, Mary, Ann, Ellen, Sarah, Elizabeth who died an infant, another Elizabeth who also died an infant, Hannah the last of the girls who also died in infancy and six boys, John, Richard who died in infancy, another Richard, Henry and finally Edward, of whom nine survived to marry and have children. Further details of this family appear on the tree on page 51. Whilst it was normal to have very large families at this time William and Sarah went on to have 50 grandchildren which again highlights the problem of trying to record such a large number of descendants.

As stated earlier William is important in our story as he claimed himself Heir in tail male of the estates of Sir John Danvers Bart. late of Swithland and on the 25th of January 1840 issued a notice to any person attending the sale of oak, timber etc., not to buy or remove it (see a copy of this notice on the previous page). Also on the 24th January 1840 he issued a notice to John Seale in Thurcaston to pay rent to him rather than to George John Butler Danvers (see copy of this notice on page 54). Eleven years previously in September 1829 William, through the persons of his cousin Elizabeth Stanfield, nee Danvers, and Joseph Sketchly of Anstey, began collecting statements from various persons some of whom were connected directly or indirectly to the family of Sir John Danvers, Swithland Hall and also to the late Augustus Richard Butler.

It is not recorded as to what actually prompted William Danvers to begin to contest the legal right of the Butler family to hold the Swithland estates or even when. As the eldest surviving male of the Danvers family William must have expected to inherit the Swithland estates. His father, also William, had died in 1761 when he was barely three years old. This meant that when the last of the male heirs to the Swithland estates died William although only ten years old at the time must have assumed that he would inherit the estates when Sir John Danvers passed away. It was common knowledge the estates were entailed to the eldest surviving male of the Danvers family. As we shall see later Sir John himself often alluded to the fact that he expected a member of the Shepshed Danvers family to inherit the estates after the death of his last surviving son.

Another factor may have been the death of Augustus Richard Butler, Mary Danvers' husband, on the 26th April 1820. This might possibly have led to one or two of the servants discussing the merits of his successor,

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

George John Butler Danvers, and the possibility of a fraud being perpetrated by his father. Rumours to this effect appear to have been floating around for some time. Some of these rumours have been touched upon in the previous chapter but we hope to go into more detail in this chapter using the actual depositions that were collected in 1829.

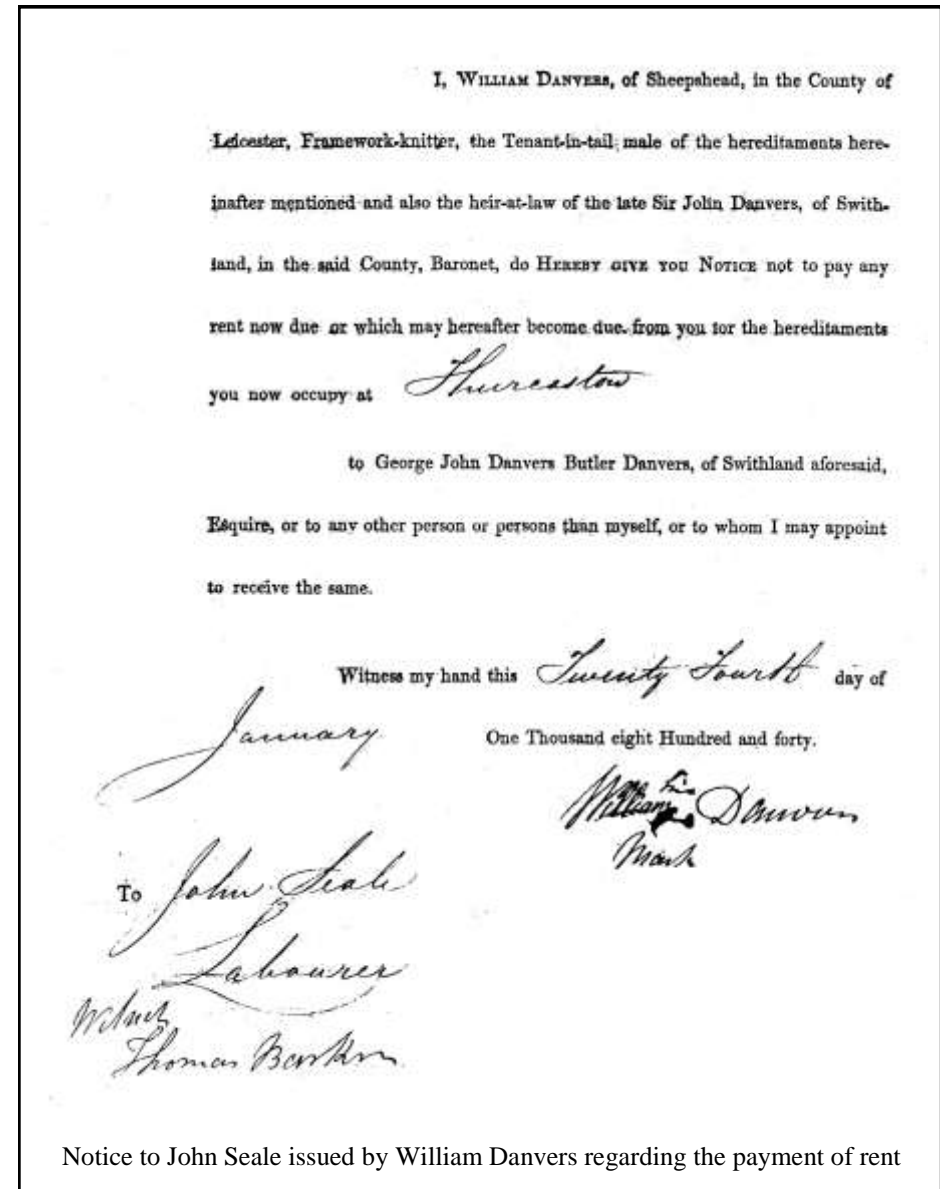
Details of a possible fraud were first uncovered in September 1829. One of the first being the deposition taken from Richard Preston on the 29th of September 1829 - *Richard Preston deposes and saith that he heard Mr. Freemantle an officer in the Guards (and brother to the present Mrs Butler) said to him "that the will by which the Estates was held was made after the death of Sir John Danvers," the deponent saith to him "How you talk" He answered him and said "I'll be damned if they was not".* This is backed up by another statement made by Joseph Sketchly himself:- *I Joseph Sketchly hereby certify that the first intimation of a fraud in the case of Danvers versus Danvers, was given to me on the 29th of Sept. 1829 by Richard Preston, who said that a Brother of the present William Butler told him in the park that the Estates were held by a forged will to which Preston replied how you talk, but, replied the other, "I'll be damned if they are not."*

Several of the many depositions that were collected mentioned the fact that Sir John Danvers regarded the Shepshed family as being his true heirs as may be seen reported in following deposition:-

Ester Fewkes saith that her late husband told her that Sir John Danvers always acknowledged the Sheepshead family as part of his own and that he frequently made them presents and once, in particular, when coming over Mount Sorrell hills Sir John said to him that the Danvers of Shepshed would one day have his estates - The husband of the deponent was then in the service of Sir John. This is dated September 29th 1829.

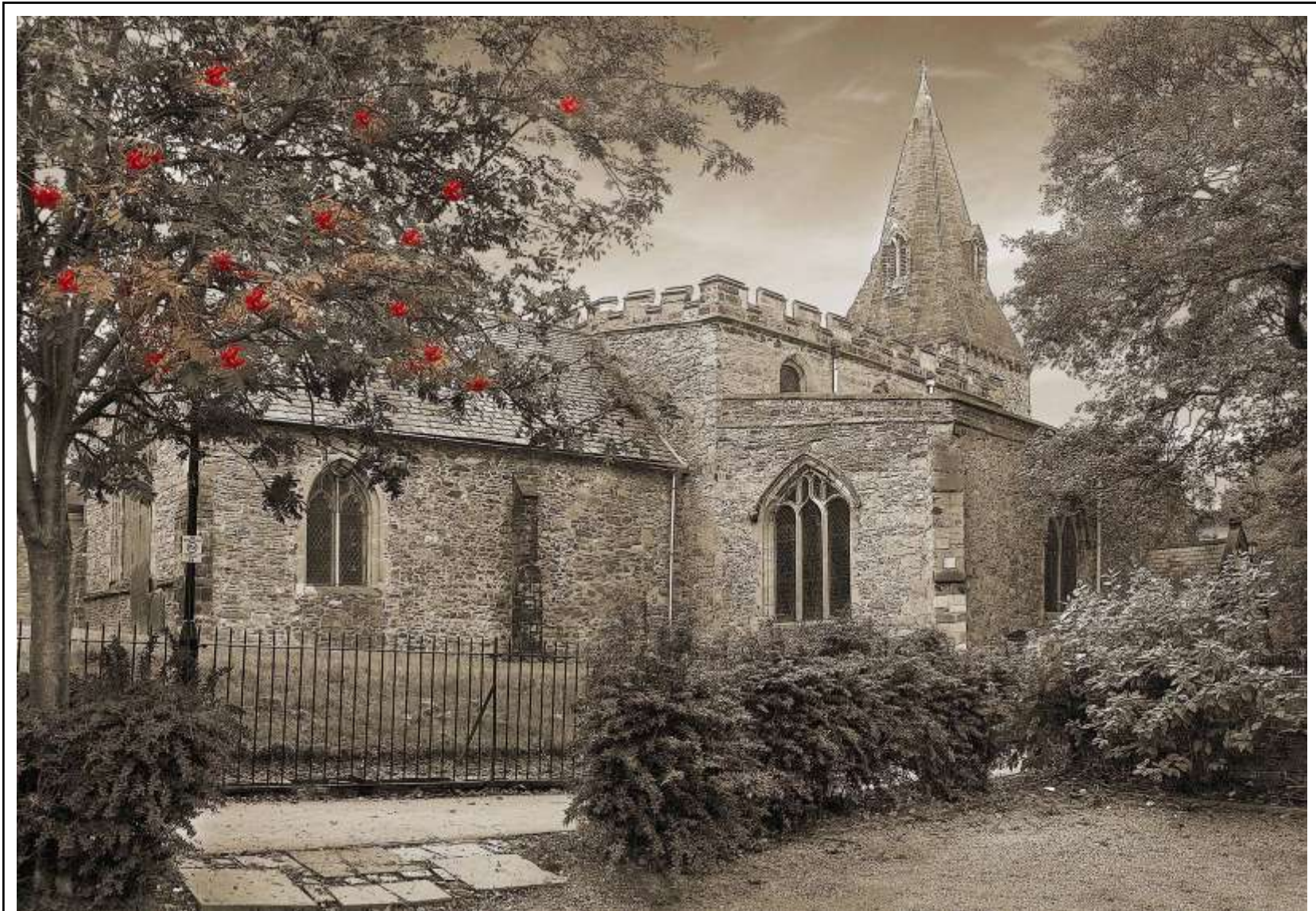
Another in a similar vein but one which added a new dimension to the facts was made by a man by the name of Johnson: *Johnson deposes and saith that he has heard David Chapman say that the present Butler would never have had the Swithland estate, if it had not been for him, and that he has heard say that the late Sir John Danvers acknowledged the Shepshed family as part of his own family.*

We shall hear more of the key role David Chapman played in helping Augustus Butler to defraud William Danvers of his inheritance in later depositions. Space demands that we can select only a few of the more interesting and pertinent depositions from a collection of over fifty. Each in their turn adds to the probability that a fraud had been perpetrated by



Augustus Richard Butler and by others in his employ. Having already looked at four of these depositions it is with David Chapman himself that we begin.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The Parish Church of Saint Botolph, Shepshed, Leicestershire.

Shepshed Parish Church was built in the 11th century with additions in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. It is dedicated to St. Botolph, the patron saint of travellers and voyagers. The bells were cast by Messrs. Taylor and Sons of Loughborough, and besides being rung on normal occasions, there is a "Pancake Bell" which is still rung on Shrove Tuesday, while a "Curfew Bell" was rung every evening at 8 p.m. in the winter.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

This was the second piece of evidence that also highlighted the likelihood of a fraud having taken place. *The Bailiffs were put into David Chapman's house on the 11th of October 1829, by George Butler for rent. The next day he told me in the presence of Mrs. Stanfield that if we could prove the pedigree of the Danvers of Sheepshed he could do all the rest and leave Butler not worth one Shilling. At our next interview at Rothley, about three weeks afterwards he told me and Mrs. Stanfield, he put the candle to the will of Sir John Danvers and that his master (Mr. Hon. Aug. R Butler) held it for him to do so he afterwards told us at Thurstaston, that he had paid the subscribing witnesses to keep the secret of the forgery twenty pounds each more than once, but named Redhead Finchley, the traveling miniature painter more particularly, as one of them and for his own faithful services his Master made his will and left him ten thousand pounds. At the next interview he told me that Butler was very kind to him, and that he should not give up a certainty for an uncertainty, but if we brought it into court, he would be with us and assist us but no further information could I procure from him. His wife has since told me that Butler allowed them £50 a year. The above I am ready to prove upon Oath when called upon.. Signed Joseph Sketchly.*

The above deposition was enlarged upon in a later conversation that took place two months later between Mrs. Elizabeth Stanfield (nee Elizabeth Manser Danvers, see page 53) and David Chapman at Rothley. This conversation relates the devious events that took place at Bath when Sir John Danvers lay dying on his deathbed:

Saturday 4th of December 1829, I Elizabeth Stanfield, went to Rothley, accompanied by Mr Joseph Sketchly, of Ansty to pay a visit to Mr. David Chapman he at that time Lived in the house with Mrs. Fowler, his wife's Mother, I was introduced to David Chapman, and shown into the parlour, and the following conversation took place with me E. Stanfield, and Mr. D. Chapman, I said to David Chapman I had been informed that the will by which George John Danvers Butler, so called in the will of the Late Lady Danvers, but in the will of Sir John Danvers, he is called John Danvers Butler but by the will with which he held the Estates it was a forgery and signed by the dead hand of Sir John. In reply David Chapman said that he and his Master, the Honorable Augustus Richard Butler, was at Bristol not Wells, and he D. Chapman took up the newspaper and in looking over it, he saw a paragraph stating, that Sir John lay dangerously ill, at his Lodgings on South Parade, Bath, and he took the paper into the room for his Master to read the same night the Honorable A. R. Butler, and Lady Lanesborough

and King the Jew, and D. Chapman, set out post for Bath, and as soon as they arrived, they went to the Lodgings of Sir John. Thomas Thomas the House Butler, who was the only servant, who had accompanied Sir John to Bath, and he refused to admit them, he said that Sir John told him, not to admit them into his presence,

Honorable A. R. Butler, Lady Lanesborough and King, went away and left D. Chapman, who was groom to the Hon A. R. Butler, to try to prevail on Thomas Thomas to admit the party into the presence of Sir John, and a promise of £150 per annum to Thomas Thomas, and this to be settled on him for Life. On that promise they was admitted and Lady Lanesborough and King did not leave him (Sir John) until he died. D. Chapman asked Thomas Thomas if Sir John had made a will. He told him he had, and it was in favour of the Danvers of Sheepshed. and he further asked him where the will was but he refused to tell him. Chapman then went out and brought a bottle of Brandy, which he invited Thomas Thomas, to take a glass with him which he Thomas Thomas did. Chapman said he made a strong glass of Brandy and took care to have a weak one himself he soon made Thomas Thomas drunk and then he got to know where Sir John's Will was.

Thomas Thomas said that Lawyer Whatton of Loughborough had it in his possession. D. Chapman told me that when Butler, Lady Lanesborough and King entered the room, Sir John was so far insensible he did not know them. They sent for a Lawyer to make the will that the present Butler holds the Estates by. At the same time D. Chapman opened a desk and took out the copy of a will which he said the Lawyer gave him after he had written the will out after the will was made and the death of Sir John was announced.

The Honorable A. R. Butler ordered him to take a horse and go post haste to Loughborough to tell Whatton, Sir John's Lawyer, that Sir John was dead, and he was to go to Bath, and take the will with him. Then he said that Whatton told that him that the will was in London and he would go there and get it, take it to Bath with him. Whatton did so but would not give up the will until he saw the will that was made in Bath.

They had sent for the Honorable Mrs. Butler the daughter of Sir John to come to Bath to see her Father was dead, when D, Chapman returned to Bath, Butler sent for him into the room and said to him, "David if it had not been for you, I should not had the will in my hand at this time, you have had the trouble of placing it with me, you shall have the pleasure of setting fire to it." I took up the candle and did so. And then Butler put the said will into the fire. D. Chapman further said, that he rode day and night from Bristol until

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twisted over the years to become even more prurient in the re-telling some seventy years later.

“Mud sticks,” as they say and although Sir John Danvers’ daughter Mary married Augustus Richard Butler on the 8th March 1792 and gave birth to her first son, George Augustus Butler on the 5th of August 1793 rumours still spread that she had had a child prior to her marriage to Augustus. As seen in the statement given by Elizabeth Glover:-

Elizabeth Glover of Thringstone in the County of Leicester, the wife of William Glover saith that she is a native of Swithland and during the time she resided at Swithland she had an illegitimate son, and she well recollects the bells of Swithland ringing on the birth of a male child, and at that time her boy was very young not more than a month old, she believes, that her son and this boy they were ringing for were both born in one month, and Sir John Danvers died in the October following and that, after his death Butler came and took possession of the property and a nurse came down with the said male child and nursed it at Swithland and she Elizabeth Glover frequently suckled the said child, when he cried, and the nurse told her that it was a Bastard, as well as her own!

That Deponent frequently met the said nurse at the house of Jane Clark in Swithland, and when the conversation was resumed by the nurse, she recollects that the family of Danvers of Sheepshead frequently came to visit, Sir John and he made them many great presents in money clothes and provisions. Sir John never approved of Butler and would not allow him to come to his House or near his person. She recollects that the House was guarded in the night and day to prevent the Heir at Law taking possession of it, as it was always expected that the family of Danvers of Sheepshead would have it as it was understood that they were Heirs to the Estate. Elizabeth Glover further told us that the said male child had a twisted foot and was lame.

There is good reason to believe that Mary’s child may have suffered from health problems as stated in several depositions. Mary was over forty years old when she had her son and child birth was difficult enough at that time for a young mother let alone a relatively elderly one especially as she was giving birth to her first child. It is also easy to believe that Sir John never approved of Augustus Butler. His daughter Mary was thirty nine years old when she married. Her spouse was eighteen years younger, only twenty one years old. It would have been obvious to Sir John that Augustus hadn’t married Mary for her ability to have children but had married her for being the heiress of a very large estate as she was the only surviving child.

Also Augustus wouldn’t have endeared himself to Sir John by having a mistress in London, a Miss Elizabeth Bizarre Sturt, whilst still being married to his daughter. Miss Sturt gave birth to two children whilst Augustus was still married to Mary Danvers. He also married Miss Sturt on the day Mary Danvers was buried on the 17th May 1802. This rather sums up his callous attitude towards his wife which was evident when he allegedly threw her out of the family home at Swithland supposedly for having had a child prior to their marriage. This is not born out by the records we have checked but it is a fact that after the death of her father she never lived at Swithland again.

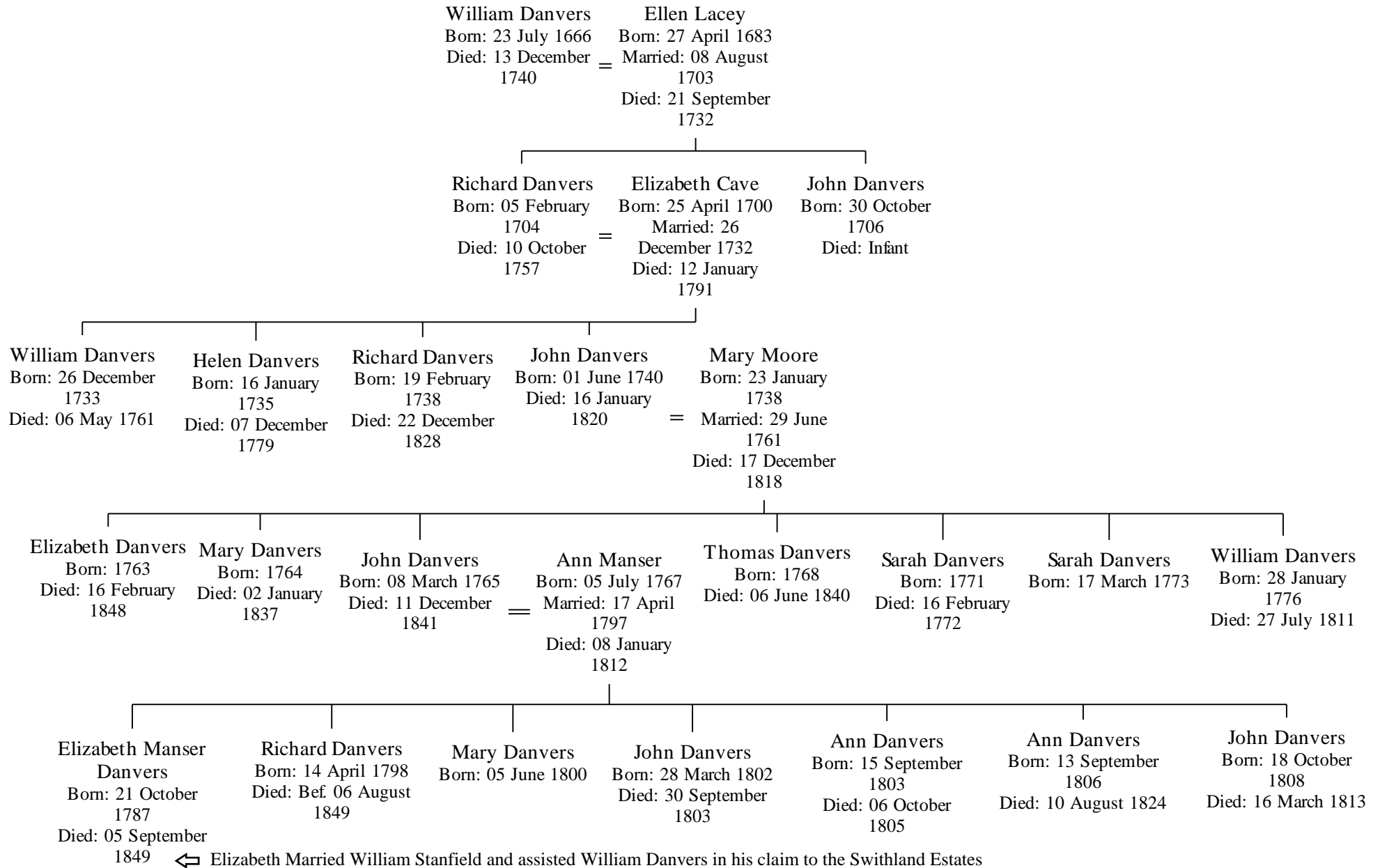
Mary must have had a lot of disappointment and sadness in her troubled and relatively short life, not only because of the actions of her husband but also in her love life, if we are to believe the following statement from a John Perkins of Leicester:- *John Perkins of Leicester saith he lived servant to Sir John Danvers about two years and left his service, about four or five years before Sir John died. He recollects the Marquis of Granby courted Miss Danvers, but he would not have her because Sir John would not give her any fortune. She then went and lived at London and never lived at Swithland after. The deponent further says, that his wife lived in service with Lady Danvers seven years, and he has heard her say, that it was family talk, that the Sheepshead family were Heirs of the Estate.*

Even if we were to ignore most if not all of the previous statements as being little more than gossip what is hard to dispute is the evidence given by the main instigator and perpetrator of the whole affair, David Chapman. He would have had everything to lose and possibly little to gain by admitting to his involvement in the fraud other than by venting his spleen on the injustice he felt when George Butler sent the Bailiffs into his home. David Chapman is also responsible for the following statement regarding the legitimacy of the birthright of George Butler:- *David Chapman says that Butler has not the means of proving his pedigree; he had a pedigree to make out but they could not do it correctly. But as there was no one to oppose them, therefore it was of no consequence, had there been any one to oppose them the estates would not have been kept by Butler.*

Ironically it would appear from another witness statement that when George Butler was made aware that William was making his claim to be Heir in tail male to the Swithland estate he would remember the problem he had proving his pedigree and try to make William’s claim to the estate harder to prove by removing the records of the birth of William’s great grandfather from the Swithland Parish Records:-

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Direct Descendants of William Danvers



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The new Swithland Hall built by Augustus Richard Butler on a completely new site to replace the old Hall which was destroyed by fire circa 1800

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I George Thorpe of Green Close Lanes Loughborough deposeth and saith that he was in Mr. Lakin's house of Swithland this day and Mrs. Lakin told him she knew where the registers were alluding to them that were cut out of the Swithland Registers, he observing, "the Swithland Registers are all gone, where are they?" The answer by her "I know where they are!"

Signed George Thorpe, Witnesses Joseph Sketchley and Elizabeth. Stanfield.

One point of very great interest in the matter of the alleged fraud is the involvement of Mrs. Elizabeth Stanfield, the daughter of John Danvers and Ann Manser, and William Danvers' cousin (see family tree on page 58). She lived in Kingston upon Hull with her husband William, so it is difficult to understand how she became such an important figure in obtaining some if not all of the above depositions. Most particularly with David Chapman who was undoubtedly the key witness to the whole affair. How did she come to hear of the fraud? How did she become involved with Joseph Sketchly? Did William Danvers ask for her assistance the minute he became aware of the fraud and why choose Elizabeth when she lived so far away? Although we haven't found any real answers to these questions in our researches we do have several letters written at this time and later by Joseph Sketchly and his son John which throw an illuminating light on what was happening during William's attempt to overturn the fraudulent will and regain the Swithland estates to which he felt entitled. The first letter anxiously written in 1829 by Joseph Sketchly shows us when Elizabeth Stanfield was expected to meet him in Ansty. Joseph wrote this letter to Mr. William Stanfield, Elizabeth's husband, expressing his concern for Mrs. Stanfield's safety.

Leicester 26 Sep 1829

Dear Sir,

The anxiety of our minds is beyond conception for the safety of Mrs. Stanfield who by your list of the 20th I fully expected on Wednesday night. But night and morning after each other hath slipped away without meeting her agreeable to appointment we cannot help feeling alarmed for her safety and as the coach leaves Leicester and arrives at Burton the same night I have taken that as the most speedy way of traveling. Therefore have made this into a parcel for that purpose and will thank you to send me a speedy answer. Family respects to all, yours J. Sketchley

This letter was addressed to Mr. Stanfield 5 Wynton Place, Cobourn Street, Hull with a additional note on the address label stating the following, 'Mr Sketchley's anxiety for Mrs. Stanfield at Ansty.' So we can see that from the beginning, prior to the fraud being discovered on the 29th of September

by Joseph Sketchley, Elizabeth Stanfield was already expected in Anstey. For whatever reason we cannot be sure, it is impossible to determine whether William Danvers had called on the services of Joseph Sketchley to assist him in his fight to regain the Swithland estates to which he felt entitled.

This feeling of entitlement began in 1768 when the last surviving son of Sir John Danvers, John Watson Danvers, died. A servant at Swithland Hall by the name of Henry Hall heard Sir John call to his wife after coming downstairs, "*my lady it's all up now*" alluding to the male branch of the family being extinct. As we have mentioned before the estates were entailed to the eldest surviving male of the Danvers family and William Danvers of Shepshed being the eldest surviving male expected to be made the heir to the estates as did other members of the Shepshed Danvers family. Sir John himself appears to have hinted that he had made his will in William's favour several times to various different people and when he heard that Sir John had died in 1796 it must have come as a shock to find his way was barred when he came to claim what he thought was his inheritance.

Whether William Danvers was aware that a fraud had been perpetrated or whether he was simply shocked by the fact that he had been left out of the will when it was published is not recorded. What isn't in question is the feeling of resentment it must have caused in him towards the Butler family and when the rumours about the fraud did come to light it must have raised his hopes of finally being able to challenge the present owner of Swithland Hall in a court of law.

It is doubtful whether William, a simple uneducated framework knitter who couldn't even sign his own name, would have the resources to challenge George Butler. William must have realised that his first cousin Elizabeth Stanfield was ideally placed to assist him in his task. She was obviously well educated and more importantly was married to a fairly wealthy man and as such was possibly in a position to help William financially. She hadn't a family apart from her husband so Elizabeth herself may have felt that she had the resources to help William in his efforts to challenge George Butler in a court of law. We have already seen that she became very involved in the interviewing of witnesses and the collecting of depositions with the help of Joseph Sketchly.

At this point it is worth referring to extracts from the letters that were written over a period of eleven years from 1829 to 1840 in chronological order as they give a fascinating insight into how things were progressing. The first dated the 16th of October 1829 was addressed to William Stanfield

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by Joseph Sketchly. This extract highlights the very positive feeling Joseph Sketchly had at the time and it also adds a delightful personal touch about Elizabeth's health:- *Since my last we have been to Mr. Thornton's (Mr. Chapman's brother in law) and he says that Chapman shall give up all he know. The family are now in the greatest disruption and have taken a most inveterate hatred towards Butler, Mr. & Mrs. Lakin look upon me as the delivery of the family and drink the health of Mr. Danvers of Shepshed with the greatest delight. They say Butler has acted as roguish a heart towards them as he can do, they that know of him are in fear of him and they hope that they shall soon have a new landlord. Mr. Thornton is coming this morning to arrange affairs respecting his mother all we now want further is Mr. Colver tell he must not stay for our gaining now. If he returns to Hull again before we have taken possession there are several other things of moment that we can not get through without him, therefore his presence is absolutely necessary but I have no doubt when he comes that Chapman will give sufficient evidence to put all doubts out of the question.*

I beg of you take this to him directly if he is not gone tell him that delays in this case are dangerous the hour is now red hot and the blows must now be struck that he must come he must for without him now we lose perhaps all opportunity which may never again occur. Collateral evidence is homing in from all parts things have taken a much happier turn than the most sanguine of us could expect. Mrs. Stanfield wishes to be remembered to you and that you need not fear of her having the gout for want of exercise, yesterday she had the pleasure of walking around the gardens from which we have plucked a pound of olives and a little fruit...

In a letter dated Ansty 21st November 1829 Joseph Sketchly continues to write in a very positive way about their chances but also mentions the death of a key witness and that Mr. Colver is now the only living witness to what happened in Bath.

... The annexed account of the family we have taken from a book of the late Sir Joseph Danvers which we have got sight of through the influence of my brother at a place we least expected there is a further book of Samuel Danvers but had not then an opportunity but shall have that in a few days. Have heard from Bath Thomas Thomas is dead have not heard from Oxfordshire yet but expect that daily likewise from London. Have heard this week repeatedly from Mr. Colver his affairs are nearly sorted and expect to see him the beginning of next week. His sons now very open and tell us very freely about the forgery and how it was done and that nobody but their

father was present that is now living and that he has a will by him and William Chapman says he believes it is that was expected to be destroyed but he does not know whether it is the real will or the copy that was burned. Everything indicates a favourable issue.

Mr. Colver assumes a greater and greater importance to the success of their cause and in the next extract taken from a letter written by Joseph Sketchly's son John on 2nd of February 1830 he pleads with William Stanfield to impress upon Colver how important it is for him to meet with David Chapman and in a typically English manner mentions the weather.

... The reason of writing is to state more fully the nature and position of the present state of affairs and those reasons why Mr. Chapman wishes for Mr. Colver to meet him in London. You know very well what is principally wanted are the deeds entailment and Mr. Chapman thinks the Attorney in London would not be so likely to let him have a sight of the copies as an attorney in the right place.

I must explain this to you Mr. Colver says he cannot see how his presence in Leicestershire should have this effect of silencing certain individuals. Mr. Chapman would like his departure to London to be kept a profound secret lest our enemies should by bribery and corruption prevent George and his wife from giving evidence favourable to our cause and thinks that Mr. Colvers coming in Leicestershire would make the Butler party alive to their dangerous situation. Mr. Chapman is very anxious to see Mr. Colver and I have no doubt from knowing his cautious manner of proceeding that he has more to disclose than he has at present unfolded. He says most confidently that it will be but a very short trial! I hope Mr. Colver will write directly as they are now waiting their departure for Town until they receive instructions from him. I hope Mr. Colver is not offended at my father's writing to him to meet them I can assure you he does it with his best intent as he thinks their chances at coming at the deeds would be greater by his presence. He does not pretend to 'lay down the law' to him but writes his opinion of the case. My Father has seen the account in the Leicester papers but there are no particulars, it merely states that such a cause came on and a verdict was given in favour of Butler with one shilling damages. I hope you will write to us before long if you are not quite froze to death (for we have had it very cold in Leicestershire) ...

In a letter dated the 13th of June 1830 there is a very interesting account of a conversation that was overheard which mentioned that George Butler was feeling very disheartened about his chances of holding onto the

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Swithland estates in the face of any action being taken by William Danvers.

. . . Mr. W. Sketchly was waiting to see the steward of Butler Danvers about some repairs at the house of Mr. Reynolds of Thurstaston and whilst there waiting in company with Mr. Reynolds & Mr. Stone's uncle (the uncle is the dependant of Stone as he Stone is very poor) and the uncle immensely rich. The subject of conversation between this uncle and Reynolds turned on the Swithland Estates when the uncle told Mr. Reynolds that there would be no repairs done at Swithland as the Shepshed man was going in with the law and he said that if they succeeded he Butler would give it all up as it would be folly in him to stand trial as all Swithland must be lost. (Noblest Sir they are not aware William is my relation of mine and they were not aware that he overheard them as he was in conversation with another person at the time.) But from their conversation he heard that this information came through the steward who had applied the Swithland repairs to Butler himself and in the Answer that confession was made from what occurred. I am fully satisfied that if the Lord Chancellor is applied to for a right of the title Butler will give up to us immediately. . . .

The following two letters were written by Lord Strathmore to Elizabeth Stanfield. Elizabeth had travelled to London with her husband to see Lord Strathmore as the following letters clearly show.

Saint James Square London August 20 1839

Madam, Since I saw you, I have been turning over in my mind all the various reports which were so very current among the friends and acquaintances of Butler Danvers as to the reality of his son being the son of himself and his wife formerly, Miss Mary which was very generally doubted and disbelieved, I have also been making enquiries whether any of his old servants are now living and find that Lettice, his Butler and David Chapman whom you know are still living, as also, Mark Noble my brother George's valet. The late Mr Butler Danvers was in the habit, of spending many months every year at my brother George's at Pauls Walden, Bury, in Hertfordshire, and Mrs Butler Danvers was also very frequently visiting my Mother before her death.

Now from all my own recollections as well as from the different inquiries I have made my own mind is most strongly convinced that there is still living sufficient evidence to carry through your claim with success. I should say to at least a Large fortune, the very extensive Estates, to a certainty. If Captain Bently, who then lived in Abingdon street, Westminster, should still be living and could be found, I am certain his evidence alone would go a very great way, towards carrying your cause. Now upon the

whole, I must in candour say, that I think your claim so very straight forward and backed by so many undoubted and to my mind, insurmountable Documents that any person of property and talent might with the greatest safety and credit take your case in hand as well as assist you without any risk and to their almost certain ultimate profit and advantage.

Wishing you every success and ready to give you every information I can or procure. I remain, Madam your sincere and well wisher Strathmore.

In the next letter written a month later Lord Strathmore continues to be confident about William's claim to the Swithland estates and continues to wish Elizabeth every success in her efforts to restore the Estates to their rightful owner.

St James Square Sept 16th 1839

Madam, Since I last saw you I have renewed my enquiries about your claims to the Estates of the late Sir John Danvers and the more I enquire, the more fully am I satisfied of the justice of your claim - independent of my own conviction of the same, which from the very intimate connection of myself & my Brother George with the late honourable Augustus Butler Danvers, is I must repeat a conviction not to be overcome. Allow me madam, now to state to you that though it is against my tenets, to interfere in any way with other Peoples Affairs, particularly in a matter like the pursuit so very delicate, yet so very highly important, still I should feel myself guilty of the greatest Injustice to your family was knowing so very much as I do on this subject to withhold my full & free & candid confession of your true & legal right as Heir at Law, to the Estates of the late Sir John Danvers and I must repeat with endoubled Confidence that any respectable person (and such only I recommend to you to call to your Aid) may with the greatest integrity and Credit not only take up your Cause but also advance you what you may require your selves. Wishing you every success the great Justice of your Cause deserves. I remain Madam yours truly Strathmore - Mrs. Stanfield, Hull. Mr Fellows will send you the Power of Attorney this Post.

This letter does raise the question of how Lord Strathmore became involved in this matter. Unfortunately in spite of all our research we have found nothing to help us shed any light on this apart from the fact that he was intimately connected with Augustus Butler. But how Elizabeth came to know this is not known to us.

What is difficult to understand at this point is why William Danvers and his supporters hadn't taken George Butler to court prior to 1839. For ten years they had amassed various statements and depositions gathered from a

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large number of people all clearly alluding to the fact that a fraud had taken place. They also had the support of Lord Strathmore himself. The amount of evidence was overwhelming and would no doubt have carried a lot of weight in a court of law. George Butler was obviously aware of this, as evidenced in the letter on the previous page. It is possible that lack of funds may have hampered the decision to go to court. Also by the year 1839 William's health was beginning to fail as may be seen in the following paragraph in which William is obliged to take out a power of attorney due to ill health.

This power of attorney, mentioned in the letter above from Lord Strathmore, refers to one made by William Danvers in which he appoints Elizabeth and her husband William Stanfield to act as attorneys on his behalf. We have a copy of this power of attorney which is very long and very convoluted but it is worth taking an extract from it to understand why William felt the need to appoint them as his attorneys.

. . . To all to whom these presents shall come I William Danvers of Shepshed in the County of Leicester Frame Work Knitter Send Greeting whereas I the said William Danvers am entitled to certain real estates in England formerly held by Sir John Danvers of Swithland in the said County of Leicester Baronet now deceased And whereas I am now aged infirm and poor and unable to prosecute my rights to the same and whereas William Stanfield of the Burrough of Kingston upon Hull Yeoman and Elizabeth his wife the daughter of my brother John Danvers have for some years past made great exertions and taken great pains and the said William Stanfield hath also expended considerable sums of money in collecting evidence to enable me to prosecute such my right with effect and whereas I am anxious that such my right should be prosecuted without delay therefore for effecting the purposes aforesaid Know Ye that I the said William Danvers have made ordained constituted and appointed and by those presents Do make ordain constituted and appointed and by those presents Do make ordain constitute and appoint the said William Stanfield and Elizabeth his wife and each of them jointly and severally my true and lawful Attorneys and Attorney agents and agent for me and in my name or otherwise and on my behalf to commence or institute any action or actions suite or suites in any Court or Courts of Law or equity or other proceeding or proceedings which my said Attorneys and Attorney shall deem requisite or proper to recover the possession of the said Estate or any part thereof. . . . (details of his will are on the next page).

The above letter of attorney was dated June 1st 1839 which means that it must have been prepared and signed before the letter from Strathmore was

written. As William's attorney it must have been Elizabeth who was the real driving force behind the decision that William made to issue the two notices regarding the payment of rent and the purchasing of timber at the Griffin Inn. Unfortunately William died on the 17th of June 1840. Was it these notices which prompted George Butler to take John Danvers, William's eldest son, to court? This is touched upon in a letter written to Elizabeth by her father John Danvers dated the 7th of February 1840. The following is an extract taken from that letter:-

. . . I think Mr. Sketchly says in his letter that Butler has commenced operations. I hope something will now be done and you will get home soon, how is William and where is he now, we never hear anything about him now, will write as soon as possible, you need not be afraid to write, Postage is not much thanks to the Whig Ministry, however you have plenty for a penny this time. So I remain your affectionate Father, John Danvers"

The operations George Butler commenced finally came to a head over four years later in a Special Jury Case at the Leicestershire Assizes on the 10th of August 1844. The case concerned the non payment of rent by the occupier of the Blue Bell public house in Mountsorrel. George Butler was represented by Messrs Hill and Humfrey. The defendants were John Danvers (the eldest son of William Danvers) and Thomas Antill who were represented by Messrs Whitehurst and Mellor. William Danvers by this time been dead for four years. It is evident that John Danvers felt the same as his father William over the fraud and was prepared to continue his father's fight.

We have not found any evidence so far to suggest that Elizabeth Stanfield was also involved after William Danvers died. Sadly Elizabeth's husband, William Stanfield, died on the 31st of August 1841 and her father four months later on the 11th of December 1841. So we must assume that she had returned to Hull to settle not only her husband's affairs but also those of her father. We can find no further reference to her being involved in the forthcoming court case brought by George Butler.

It is worth recording some of the details taken from the court case as they refer to John Danvers' claim to the title. The following extracts were copied from a report of the case in the Leicester Mercury published on the 10th of August 1844.

Mr Hill proceeded to address the Jury. He said the property in question consisted of a public house at Mountsorrel which had long been known by the sign of the Blue Bell. There were three defendants to the present action; the first of whom was the occupier of the house, the second the lessor, and

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The Last Will and Testament of William Danvers, Framework Knitter, and Heir-in-Tail Male of the Swithland Estates


*This is the last Will and Testament of me William Danvers, the Elder, of Sheepshead,
in the County of Leicester, Framework knitter.*

I give and bequeath all and singular my real and personal Estate situate at Sheepshed aforesaid and elsewhere unto my two sons, William Danvers, the Younger, and Henry Danvers and to the survivor of them his Heirs Executors, administrators and assigns upon trust to sell the same as they or he may think proper and I hereby declare their or his receipt or receipts shall be sufficient discharges to all persons paying the same and shall discharge them from seeing to the application thereof and out of the monies to use as aforesaid to pay my just debts, funeral and testamentary expenses after the payment thereof. To pay to my Grandson John Smith the sum of Ten Pounds to and for his own use and benefit. To my said Son William Danvers the Younger (over and above his residuary Share) the sum of Five Pounds and Five Shillings and then to pay and divide the residue thereof unto and equally amongst my children John, William, Richard, Henry, Mary Hollis, widow, and Sarah wife of Thomas Grimley and Ellen the wife of Charles Cobley share & share alike nevertheless as to the share of my said Daughter Ellen Cobley upon trust to pay the interest thereof to her for her life (independent of her present or future husband) whose receipt alone shall be sufficient discharge for the same and after her decease to pay the same unto her child or children if more than one.

And I hereby absolve my said Trustees for the time being of my Will from responsibility for the receipts and defaults of each other and for involuntary losses. And I authorize such trustees to retain and allow each other all expenses incurred in or about the Execution of the trusts of my Will and I appoint the said William Danvers, the Younger, and Henry Danvers Executors of this my Will in Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty first day of August one thousand eight hundred and thirty seven

Signed sealed published and declared by the said William Danvers the testator as and for his last Will and Testament in the presence of us who in his presence at his request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as Witnesses

Alfred Hucknall
John Brittleampe
George Brice

The Mark of

William Danvers
the Elder

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

the third a person of the name of Danvers, who supposed that he had some claim upon the estate and also to the whole of Mr. Butler Danvers property in this County and no doubt everywhere else. With regard to this claim two or three circumstances might be mentioned. First he had no claim whatever to his father, or any other person, except the present owner; again if he ever had any claim it was barred by the lapse of time, and supposing it had not been barred by the lapse of time he could not have put it in the present action, because this action was virtually between Mr. George Butler Danvers and the occupier's of the house.

He (Mr. Hill) was instructed that the defendant Danvers was a poor man - a man in an inferior station in life, who supposed that he had some claim upon the Leicestershire estate of Mr. Butler Danvers. which had been in his possession ever since 1820. It was said by him (John Danvers) that the present possessor of the property was a suppositious son, and was not the son of the former Mr. Danvers or of his wife. These things unfortunately affected the peace of mind and happiness of those against whom they were said. Some people considered themselves sufficiently strong in mind to withstand such rumours, but however ridiculous or absurd they might appear to the world, the individual who is the subject of them is not so philosophically inclined; and without delaying the Jury by any lengthened remarks, he hoped to be able to shew them the utter folly of such rumours; and if that would restore the quietude of one individual, he knew the gentleman of the Jury would not regret the few minutes he should occupy their attention. It not infrequently happened that when a poor man bore the same name as the owner of a large estate, the idea got into his mind, that he was the only rightful heir to the estate; and the Jury would not only be doing a benefit to the then occupier of the estate, but to the defendant himself, by shewing him how mistaken he was in his notions.

The remainder of the court action concerned itself with the occupancy of the Blue Bell public house and the non payment of the rent. David Chapman was called to give evidence and although he did broach the subject of the burning of the will, this wasn't taken any further. In his summing up of the case the Judge directed the jury to find for the plaintiff (George Butler) and certified by which the whole costs would fall on the defendant. So the first attempt by John to have his day in court and to have the chance to bring the fraud to the attention of the general public was not as successful as he might have hoped. This setback affected John in more ways than one. Not only did he lose the case but by this time he no longer had the support of

Elizabeth Stanfield and of course the financial support that her husband provided. It also appears to have made John extremely wary about taking any further immediate action. Without the resources provided by Elizabeth it was twenty years before John decided to try once more by involving his brother Richard in his fight as the following statement written 20 years later shows. -

I John Danvers of Sheepshed Frame work knitter and Richard Danvers of Sheepshed Frame work knitter in the county of Leicester - Do authorize John Mason to Bargain and agree that the said John Mason is empowered as our agent to raise the sum of one hundred pounds on such security as shall be agreed on by the said John Mason or any other sum not exceeding one hundred pounds as the Case may be. In Witness whereof we the said parties have set our hands this day of February the year of our Lord 1864 John Danvers his mark Richard Danvers his mark.

Elizabeth Stanfield must have returned to Hull not long after the death of William Danvers. Her and her husband's power of attorney came to an end with William's death. It may have been better for her if she had stayed in Shepshed for she was caught up in the terrible Asiatic Cholera epidemic that swept Hull in August 1849 and died of cholera aged 62 on the 5th of September 1849. (See death certificate on next page). A dreadful end for someone who had spent over ten years of her life trying her very best to reclaim the Swithland Estates for her first cousin William Danvers. The report below is a sobering account of the results of this appalling epidemic.


On the 10th of August, 1849, a terrible form of Asiatic cholera made its appearance in Hull. The terrible scourge lasted three months, and carried off 1,860 persons, being at the rate of one in 43 of the population.

In his "Recollections of Hull" the late Reverent James Sibree says the men employed in digging the graves had no respite, but pursued their doleful task both night and day. At first single graves were dug, for the reception of some eight or nine bodies, but the demand for room became so urgent, that double graves were constructed, in which the coffins were piled one upon another, without any earth between them. Only two of these, however, were opened; the sight was so appalling that the men refused to dig any more.

The cemetery hearse was in constant requisition to remove the stricken poor from all parts of the town. The cholera plot presented the appearance of a ploughed field, there being no time to make the graves neat. Mr. Sibree records the fact that on one "awful day", Sunday, September 9th, he himself interred no less than 43 bodies of his fellow citizens.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number COL 865468

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Kingston upon Hull

1849 DEATH in the Sub-district of Myton in the County of the Town of Kingston upon Hull

Columns:-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
	<i>fifth September 1849 30 Osborne Street Myton Hull</i>	<i>Elizabeth Stanfield</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>62 years</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>Asiatic Cholera 18 hours Certified</i>	<i>Christopher Meeke Present at the death 30 Osborne Street Myton Hull</i>	<i>fifth September 1849</i>	<i>Edwin Sedgwick Registrar</i>


CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 18th day of January 2007

DYB 377728

See note overleaf

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WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.


MS

The death certificate of Elizabeth Stanfield, nee Elizabeth Manser Danvers, showing cholera as the cause of her death .



Framework Knitting in a Cottage at Enderby, Leicestershire, from an engraving by C. M. Pott, now hanging in the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum

CHAPTER SIX

Shepshed 1856 - 1880

As we have seen in the previous chapter it had taken John Danvers almost twenty years before he began to gather his resources to make one last determined attempt to reclaim the Swithland estates. His first task, twelve years after the court case, was to pursue the most obvious course of action which would give him some credence in the eyes of his supporters and the courts, that of applying for the title of Baronet which only comes through the male line and to which of course, in spite of changing their name to Danvers, the Butler family was not entitled. The following extract is taken from a letter written by a Mr. Bolton dated the 19th March 1856. He begins by expressing the opinion that John Danvers had little or no chance of success in his claim to the estates.

Dear Sir,

I have carefully read the Papers you forwarded to me in this matter, and looking at the amount of evidence there given in detail, I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. John Danvers the Claimant has no chance of success, and for this reason:- Supposing he (John) had evidence sufficient to set aside the will of the last Sir John Danvers Bart. dated 16th September 1796 he would not even then acquire the Estates which are mentioned and set forth in the Marriage Settlement of said Sir John Danvers with Miss Mary Watson dated 28th and 29th of August 1752 for the uses and Trusts of that Settlement, are as follows:- This daughter was his Heiress at law, therefore had he, Sir Danvers died without making his will, she would under the uses declared by the settlement of the 28th and 29th August 1752, by the words "His heirs and Assigns" be entitled to the estates contained in that settlement, and her husband would take them by marriage with her as Tenant by the courtesy of England. But as Sir John Danvers by his will dated 16th Sept 1796 gave the estates to his daughter Mary the wife of the said Augustus Richard Butler (Who afterwards took the surname of Danvers) for her life, and at her death to her husband if he survived her (which event it appears took place) and after the death of the survivor, he gave the same estates to his grandson John Danvers Butler, son of said Augustus Richard Butler and Mary his wife, his heirs and executors Administrators and assigns, I do not see how you can dispossess these parties whilst that will remains a valid document, for in spite of the trial of Ejectment in 1844, the same has never been upset . .

Bolton continued in this vein at some length continuing to express his reasons for doubting John's chances, but towards the end of the letter Bolton went on to discuss the chances of John assuming the title of baronet:-

. . . Now as regards the claim to the title, that rests upon very different grounds, and taking it for granted that you are capable of bringing forth the evidence of births, marriages, and deaths so as to establish your own lineal descent from William Danvers who was the brother of Samuel Danvers the lineal ancestor of the last Sir John Danvers who died in 1796, it appears that the present John Danvers the claimant is the male heir of the Danvers family. It may then be said, of what use would the title to a Baronet be to the claimant in his present position in life without the estates, my reply to that question would be this that if the present claimant established himself as Sir John Danvers, Baronet he would be more likely to be looked upon and listened to in his claim to the estates than he now is as simple John Danvers and a poor man, for the facts of his being established as Sir John Danvers would give him a station, and many would then come forward to speak as to the real facts of who was or was not the real son of Mary Butlers Danvers, and the likewise regard to the alleged destruction of the will and in the least possible light in which it can be viewed, you would be more likely to advance the position of yourself and family in after life than you ever can expect to do now. The claim to the title would (subject to my remark beforehand) cost you more than £50 or £60 and you might get a friend to advance this for you when you would not for a higher sum upon such an uncertainty.

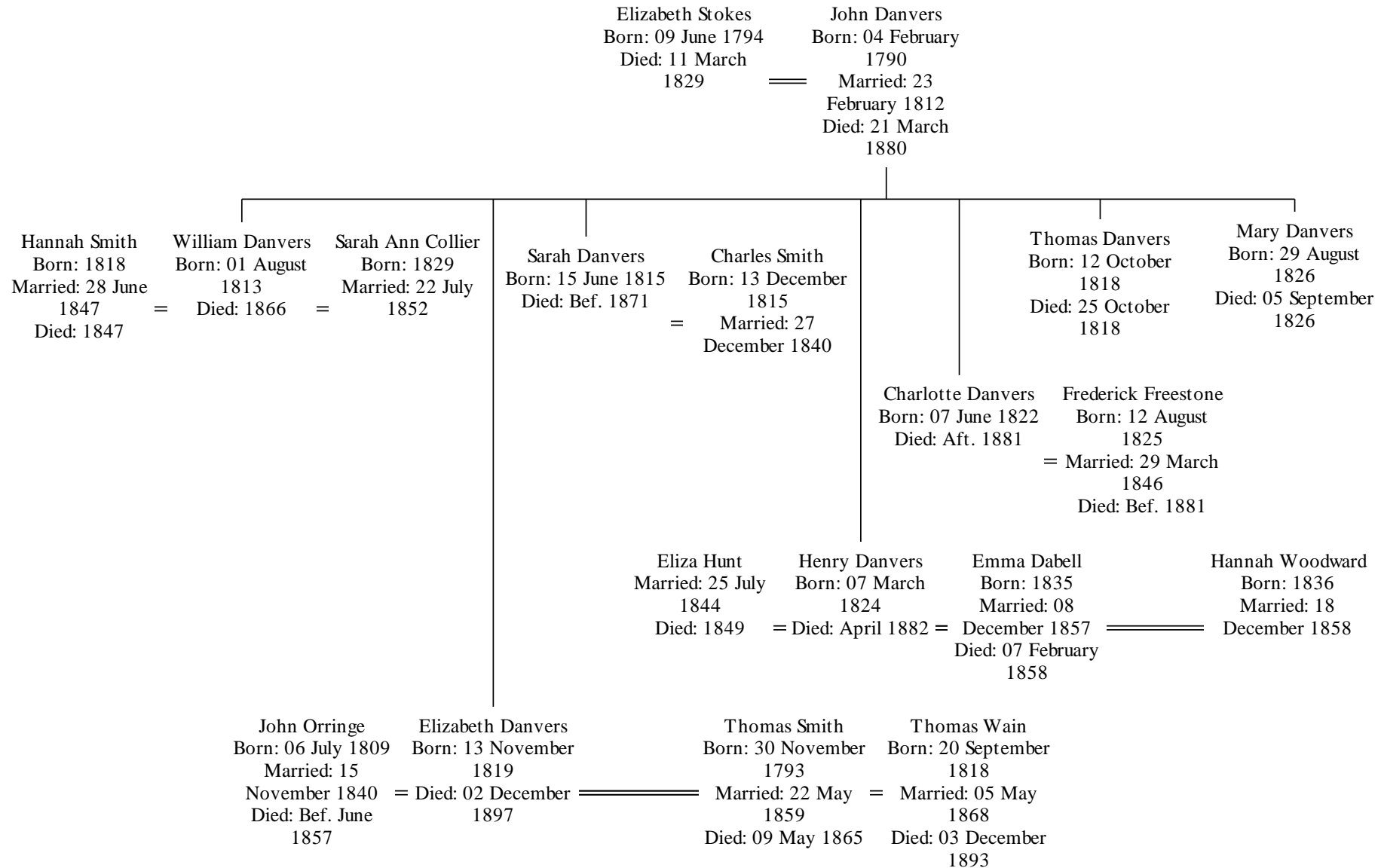
We have no records as to whether or not he pursued this any further, but as the letter above suggests John being a poor man it is very doubtful if he could afford the expense of claiming the title.

Before going any further with the continuing matter of the fraud we thought it might be pertinent at this point to take a close look at the family of John Danvers as his sons are mentioned in some of the documents we shall be referring to later. John married twice and had a large family with both his wives as may be seen on the two family trees on pages 68 and 70.

He married his first wife Elizabeth Stokes on the 23rd of February 1812 and had seven children by her. The eldest William was born on the 1st of August 1813. He assisted his father in his bid to regain the estates as did his younger brother Henry who was born on the 7th of March 1835. The only other son Thomas, was born on the 12th of October 1818 but died when he was only 13 days old. Of the daughters we have Sarah, Elizabeth, Mary, who died at only 7 days old, and Charlotte. Charlotte is important as her husband

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants of John Danvers and Elizabeth Stokes



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Frederick Freestone also gave his support to his father-in-law. Sarah married Charles Smith, a baker, and had five children.

Her sister Elizabeth must have must have been very strong willed and had a feisty personality if our records are anything to go by. She had three husbands over a long lifetime and outlived them all. She married her first husband John Orringe on the 15th of November 1840. Her wedding Banns were called at Shepshed on the 24th and 31st of May 1840 and again on the 21st of June. This marriage, however, was forbidden by her father who on the 14th June 1840 objected on the grounds that Elizabeth was under age. Elizabeth not to be thwarted waited until she was 21 years old on the 13th of November and married two days later, much against her father's wishes.

She had seven children by John and lived under very difficult and trying circumstances which may be seen in the records of the Loughborough Workhouse Minutes, page 1327, dated 8th of November 1841 - *Orringe John 32 F.W.K. of Shepshed, wife Elizabeth 22, son John 2 months, wife is F.W.K. earns 1 shilling and sixpence. To get 2 shillings and sixpence and 12lbs of bread during illness, per week.* Later we read on page 1469 dated 1st of March 1842 that *Orringe, John, the son, is dead, expenses of the funeral 8 shillings and sixpence.* Then on page 1580 dated the 7th of June 1842 we read:- *Orringe John, Shepshed 32, wife and 1 child. Medical relief, ale bill six shillings and four and a half pence confirmed.* Times must have been very tough for Elizabeth but she seems to have been strong enough both physically and mentally to cope as she later was to marry and bury two more husbands.

Her lack of respect for authority not only got her into conflict with her father but also with her church elders. From the Mormon film 87030, early LDS records Shepshed, Leicestershire - *Elizabeth was born on the 13th of November 1819 and baptised into Mormon faith on the 1st of January 1846, she was cut off for being disorderly 16.4.1850 then she was re-baptised 22.10.1852 and re-confirmed 24.10.1852 but she was again cut off 25.12.1853 for rebellion against the authorities of the Church. She was transferred to Shepshed from the Loughborough Branch of the Mormons 30.1.1870. Removed from Shepshed Branch March 1873.* Elizabeth Danvers was certainly someone to be reckoned with and one can only admire her spirit and fortitude.

Her brothers, William and Henry, like their father John, were framework knitters and as times were getting harder and it was increasingly difficult to earn a decent living wage they both found it necessary to move out of

Shepshed and ended up in Nottinghamshire obviously trying to better themselves. As the family tree on page 70 shows, William moved to Nottingham and married Hannah Smith on the 28th of June 1847 at St Paul's Nottingham. They had a son William born on the 12th October 1847, Hannah died soon after possibly due to complications after giving birth. William married again five years later to Sarah Ann Collier on the 22nd July 1852, born in 1829 Sarah was sixteen years his junior. No children are recorded.

Henry moved firstly to Duffield in Derbyshire and met and married Eliza Hunt on the 25th July 1844. The major occupation in the village itself was framework knitting encouraged by Jedediah Strutt's famous 'Derby Rib'. They had three children, one named Sarah who went on to marry a William Jackson and two by the name of Elizabeth both of whom died in infancy. The youngest died in May 1849 and her mother Eliza died a month later. Again it looks like it was due to complications arising from the birth. Eight years later Henry had moved to the parish of Basford. Basford seemed to be undergoing something of a boom at the time as the following suggests:-

It is to the lace and hosiery manufacturers and to its contiguity to Nottingham, that Basford Parish owes its present wealth and consequence; and from which causes its population has increased during the last fifty years, from 2,124 to 10,093 souls in 1851; in consequence of which, several new villages have been built in the parish, which now contains eight bleaching establishments, a great number of stocking frames, and bobbin net machines.

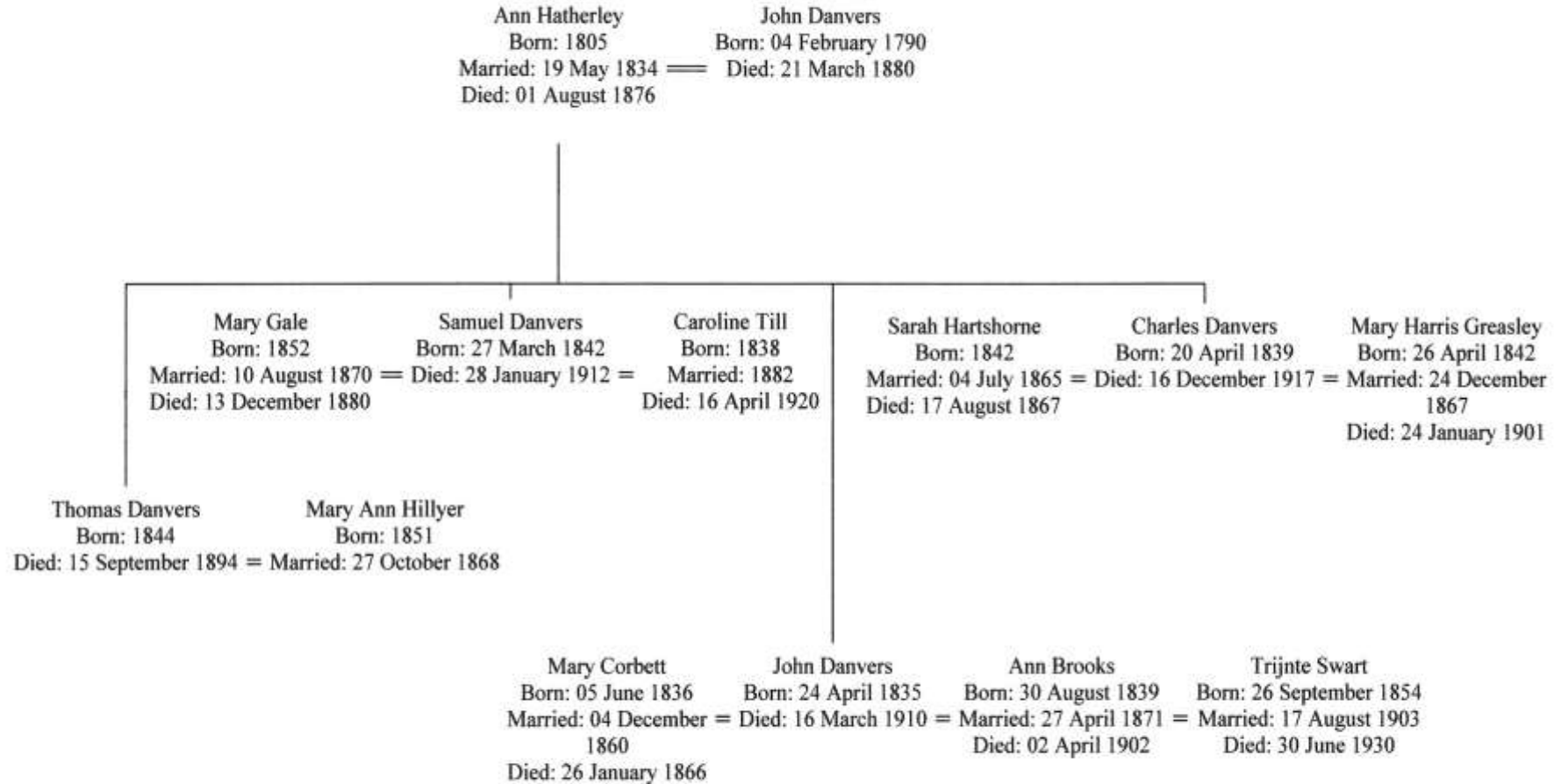
Henry married Emma Dabell on the 8th of December 1857. They had a son William born on the 30th December 1857. Again possible complications with the birth meant that Emma died soon after the birth of William on the 7th of February 1858. Their son William dying not long after on the 28th of February 1858. Henry must have moved to Bulwell on the outskirts of Nottingham very soon after Emma was buried as his son was buried in St. Mary's, Bulwell, aged 3 months.

Although the death of mothers and children were not uncommon at this time Henry and William seemed to have had more than their share of misfortune and the blame must lie on the conditions that many framework knitters found themselves living in at this time. The following two items, taken from the brief History of Framework Knitting to be found in the appendix at the end of this book, may help us to understand some of the dreadful privations they underwent at this time:-

In 1844 there were in Basford 518 stocking frames. The excess of labour was much greater than the demand, and the wages were miserably low.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants of John Danvers and Ann Hatherley



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Also the following testimonial about the lot of framework knitters in Hinckley provides a harrowing picture of the conditions that many framework knitters in general were working under:- *'The general condition of the people at Hinckley was wretched in the extreme. There were hundreds of people here who had no bed to lie on and scarcely any furniture of any sort in their houses. The children were almost naked and without any shoes or stockings. There were many families who existed on 11d to 1s (5 new pence) per head per week.'* *The Relieving Officer also gave evidence, and said that the homes of the people were in a deplorable state. 'There were very few of them with more than one sleeping room, where the parents and children of both sexes were all huddled together.'* It isn't any wonder then that to give birth under such appalling conditions was so hazardous for women married to framework knitters. Whether or not brothers Henry and William lived in these conditions is not known and can only be guessed at.

Henry married again for the third time on 18th of December 1858 to a Miss Hannah Woodward. This time he seems to have been more fortunate in his choice of wife as she gave him nine children, six of whom went on to have families of their own. According to our records this family stayed in and around Bulwell, none returning to Shepshed as far as we know.

John Danvers' first wife Elizabeth Stokes died at the age of 34 years on the 11th of March 1829. He married his second wife Ann Hatherley on the 19th of May 1834. Ann had been married before to a John Tivey and had three children by him. As may be seen from the family tree on page 70 John Danvers and Ann had four children, John, Charles, Samuel and Thomas. The eldest son John, like his step sister Elizabeth, was baptised and confirmed into the Mormon faith on the 16th of February 1867, John was ordained an Elder on the 29th of February 1878. Three years later on the 15th of March 1881 he was set apart to the office of second counsellor to Elder Charles Bennett, president of the Shepshed Branch. Then on the 26th October 1881 he was appointed to succeed Charles Bennett as President of the Shepshed Branch. As a person so dedicated to his faith we wonder how he must have reacted to the religious waywardness of his step-sister Elizabeth.

John married his first wife Mary Corbett on the 4th of December 1860. The Mormon records note that Mary was born on the 5th of June 1836 and baptised into the Mormon faith on the 28th of March 1852 and was confirmed 28.3.1852. Like Elizabeth her sister-in-law she was cut off on the 25.12.1853 for neglect of duty. Mary was re-baptised on the 3rd of June 1864 and confirmed on the 5th of June 1864. Mary died on the 26th January

1866 of child birth and in full faith of the gospel. John and Mary had two children John who was born on the 9th of December 1861 and George who was born on the 22nd of January 1866. Sadly, as we have noted from the Mormon records, Mary died aged 30 only four days after giving birth to George who died two months later on the 29th of March 1866.

Five years later John Danvers took Ann Brooks as his second wife on the 27th of April 1871. Interestingly they were married at the same church as his eldest step brother William at St. Paul's, Nottingham by banns. Ann was also a Mormon and was re-baptised into the Mormon faith on the 1st of May 1880 and confirmed on the 2nd of May that same year. They had three sons, William, Ernest and Wilford. The eldest William was born in Woodborough on the 30th of October 1871. The other two boys were both born at Shepshed so John and Ann must have returned to Shepshed after being in Nottinghamshire. According to the Mormon Immigration Index 1884 John emigrated to the U.S.A. aged 49 a farmer from Nottingham with wife, 2 sons and Flora Harvey. They left England from Liverpool on Saturday the 1st of November 1884 on the S.S. Arizona and arrived in New York ten days later on the 11th, and arrived in Salt Lake City on the 19th November 1884. Travelling with them were only two of their sons Wilford and Ernest, the eldest son William having travelled to the U.S.A. the year before. The Mormon Immigration Records state the following: *William Danvers sailed on the SS Nevada in August 1883 from Nottingham age 10. He left Liverpool, England on the 29th of August 1883 and arrived in New York on the 10th of September 1883. Arriving in Salt Lake City on the 17th of September.*

Ann Brooks died on the 2nd of April 1902 aged 62 in Plain City Utah. A year later John Danvers married for the third time Trijnte Swart who was born in Holland. John Danvers died on the 16th March 1910 and his third wife Trijnte died twenty years later in 1930.

The second eldest son of John Danvers and Ann Hatherley was Charles Danvers born on the 20th of April 1839. We will be returning to this Charles a little later in our story as he and his eldest son Charles William were also involved in trying to restore the Swithland estates to the Danvers family.

The third son Samuel was born on the 27th March 1842. He married Mary Gale on the 10 August 1870 and had one son Samuel named after his father. Samuel junior was born on the 2nd of July 1871. He married Florence Amelia Millor on the 11th of April 1895. They had two children the eldest a boy named Joseph Henry Victor Everard Danvers and a girl named Doris Mary Danvers. It is thanks to her son Peter that we have this interesting story

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Emigrants arriving on Ellis Island having sailed to America on the S.S. Nevada.

about his grandfather Samuel Danvers junior.

Samuel and Florence did not get on - she only cooked for him. He was a countryman who loved nature. He was a keen angler and could tickle trout which he sometimes poached from the river running through Bradgate park. In his early life he was involved with textiles. Samuel left Shepshed as a young man and was employed in Leicester by a firm called Steel and Burks. He lodged in Leicester during the week but walked home to Shepshed each weekend. Samuel owned allotments in Queens Road, Oadby, where he grew apple trees, grape vines, dahlias, carnations and tomatoes in long green-houses. During the war years he and a friend went into large scale tomato production, so much so that two prisoners from the prisoner of war camp based in Shady Lane in Evington, Leicester were sent to assist him. Samuel was deaf, hunchbacked and scruffy with a mop of white hair as he got older.

He rode a bike (more rust than bike) an old upright, which was taken away from him when he was 83 years old as he always seemed to get his wheels caught in the tram lines and kept disrupting the tram service. He was master tailor, and made clothes for all the family. He gained a contract with

the Clothing Hall in York and made riding breaches for the gentry by hand. Peter remembers him saying that machine stitches allowed for "no give" so he hand stitched in preference. Samuel had a house in Avenue Road Extension, a terraced house with a small room at the rear which was piled high with fabric from York, he had a bench and a trestle table and would sit, as Peter remembered, cross legged on his bench sewing. Samuel ended his life at Hillcrest Home for old people in Leicester. Hillcrest was a terrible place which has since been demolished. Hillcrest was a stones throw from the Leicester Mercury Newspaper Offices.

Samuel Danvers' wife Florence was quite eccentric and she and Samuel hardly spoke to one another. She constantly accused him of searching her room periodically. The only real contact they had with one another was that she cooked for him. Florence was 93 when she died on the 25th of March 1963. Samuel himself died a year later on the 26th of January 1964 aged 92.

Sadly Samuel's mother Mary Gale, the wife of Samuel Danvers senior, died on the 13th December 1880 aged only twenty four. Two years after Mary's death in 1882 Samuel married for the second time Caroline Till, a nurse, born in Newhall, Stafford in Derbyshire. No children have been found from this marriage. Samuel died aged 69 on the 28th of January 1912, his wife Caroline survived him by eight years dying on the 16th of April 1920.

John and Ann Danvers' fourth son Thomas was born in 1844. He married Mary Ann Hillyer on the 27th of October 1868 and they had 12 children, four of whom died in infancy. They went on to have 22 grandchildren.

Apart from John Danvers, William Danvers and Sarah Lester had 12 other children as may be seen in the two family trees on page 78 and page 79. Four of the children, Elizabeth born on the 15th of March 1798, Richard born on the 14th of April 1800, Elizabeth born 21st of April 1806 and Hannah born 5th of September 1807, all died in infancy.

Of the survivors, the eldest Mary was born on the 24th of June 1788 she married Edward Heanes on the 10th of February 1806 and had two children by him namely Sarah and William both of whom died in infancy. Edward was to die only a few months after his son William in 1808 aged only 21 years. She was married again for the second time seven years later to another framework knitter William Hollis, three years her junior, on the 26th of December 1815. They had five children all of whom survived into adulthood. We have a record of Mary's son Robert Hollis of Shepshed who at the tender age of 11 years was apprenticed to Joseph Reed, Wheelwright of Woodhouse. He must have tired of this as he later became a framework knitter.

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We also have another record of Mary's son William who was baptised into the Mormon faith on the 28th of December 1845, was confirmed a day later then cut off on the 3rd of April 1849 for neglect of duty. All Mary's family were involved in framework knitting in some form or other, as so many families were in Shepshed at that time,



The S.S. Arizona in port, showing damage to her bow received when she struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic on the 7th of November 1879.

As we have already noted John was the second eldest followed by Ann the third eldest. Ann was born on the 29th of January 1792. She married George Smith on the 7th of November 1814 and gave birth to two children, John and William. Ann died on the 2nd of July 1818 aged 26, her husband George dying five years later aged thirty. We have no further records as to what happened to their children. Ann was followed by Ellen who was born on the 4th of July 1793. Like her sisters before her she married a framework knitter Charles Cobley and together they had one daughter Sarah born on the 14th of October 1832.

Sarah was next, born on the 11th of December 1794. She too chose a framework knitter for a husband; he was Thomas Grimley who was born in

Whitwick. They married on the 3rd of July 1815 and had ten children, four of whom died young. The second eldest son, William, was born on the 12th of January 1801 and like his father became a framework knitter. He married Sarah Lester on the 25th of December 1822 and had twelve children by her. Four were to die in infancy and one in her teens. Interestingly two of the children, John and Diana, were registered blind, Diana being born blind. The following notes were taken from the Loughborough Workhouse minutes:

13.4.1841 Page 1175 John Danvers aged 18, Shepshed - Blind. To be allowed 2/- a week to enable him to be sent to school for the indigent blind at Liverpool. 7.12.1841 Page 1363 John Danvers age 19 single Shepshed - Nearly Blind cannot work. Lives with father William F.W.K. and 5 other children, two of them nearly blind. To get 1/- and 8lbs bread a week. 26.4.1842 page 1539 John Danvers age 18 single Shepshed, applied for clothing to send to Blind School at Liverpool. To be ordered if he will be received. 10.5.1842 page 1539 John Danvers age 19 Shepshed. Sent to blind school at Liverpool 6 months cost £2.12.0d. Expenses to Liverpool £3. Clothing £6.4.1d.

The Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool is one of the leading schools of its kind in the world. The school was founded in 1791 by Edward Rushton and was the first such school in Britain, second only to Paris in the world. It is a non-maintained special school and a totally independent charity catering for the needs of pupils aged between two and nineteen with a visual impairment and additional disabilities, including multi-sensory impairment.

Although John was blind he worked as a framework knitter and when aged 49 John married a widow by the name of Elizabeth Harrington. They had one child John Arthur Spencer four years prior to their marriage on the 26th of December 1872. Richard was the second eldest surviving son, born on the 26 December 1872. He also took up the family trade of framework knitting. He married Mary Ragg on the 11th of October 1804. They had six children and typical of this branch of the family, as we have seen, three were to die in infancy. This factor alone testifies to the poor conditions under which all framework knitters lived at this time.

Richard like many of his siblings was baptised into the Mormon faith but was cut off on the 11th of July 1852, for lying and disorderly conduct. All his three remaining children were involved in framework knitting. One of his sons named Edward had a narrow escape according to the Leicester Chronicle dated October 27th 1883. *On Wednesday evening October 24th, during a storm a poplar tree belonging to William Cotton a hosiery*

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manufacturer Charley Way, was uprooted by the wind and fell across the roof of a frame shop occupied by Mr. E. Danvers part of which fell in. One or two persons were at work at the time but escaped.



Fanny Saunders wife of Richard Danvers, see page 76.

It is also well worth mentioning an incident regarding Fanny Saunders who was the wife of Edward's son Richard (see a photo of her above). According to Gerald Price, her grandson, Fanny was a very large woman. She was 6' 2" tall and weighed 19 stone. The story goes that she walked to her local butchers in Ashby Road, Coalville, and saw a full pig hanging up, she told the butcher that she would like it, the butcher told her that if she could lift it then she could have it. Fanny lifted the pig from the hook and carried it home. The pig was said to have weighed twenty score, (400 lbs).

The third eldest son was Henry born on the 7th of September 1808. He married Sarah Oakley on the 8th of August 1836 and had two children by her. Only one of them Harriet surviving to marry and have children. The last surviving son of the marriage between William Danvers and Sarah Lester was Edward born on the 5th of October 1810. Edward was a framework knitter like his father, sadly dying when he was only 26 years old.

William and Sarah must have had a very difficult time trying to raise such a large family, two of whom were blind, as framework knitting had entered into very difficult times as may be seen in the notes at the end of this book. Wages had dropped dramatically due to several factors; not least was the end of the Napoleonic wars. As we have seen all members of the family were soon put to work from a very early age which meant that most framework knitters tended to be illiterate. How William found the time to challenge Augustus Butler is difficult to understand and it would not have been possible had it not been for his cousin Elizabeth Stanfield.

After detailing all of William's large family it is now time to return to the saga of the Swithland fraud. Although we feel that we may be criticised for spending so much time and detail on this particular aspect of the Shepshed Danvers family history it did become an obsession for four generations of the family and occupied their thoughts and actions for a hundred years. We also feel it is vitally important that future generations of the Danvers family fully understand what happened to their inheritance and their lineage after over three hundred years of owning the Swithland estates.

Already we have seen that John had a major setback in the Court case of 1844 when the court's decision went against him and the other defendants. John appeared to have a very strong case and the reasons as to why he was unsuccessful are to be found in the Swithland Estate notes written later by Charles William Danvers and we can do no better than quote from them:-

When the trial came forth the present Lord could not find the register of his birth, Randall the attorney for John Danvers 'sold' the case of John Danvers and suffered the birth of the present Lord to be forged. On Sunday the 9th of August at Mr. Thomas Cradock's house in the County of Leicester which trial was coming on Monday 10th 1844, David Chapman swore on the trial that he and his master burnt Sir John Danvers will after he was dead, and the said Randall, John Danvers solicitor, suffered a verdict to be gained in the behalf of the present Lord Lanesborough, Randall the solicitor received a large sum of money for suffering a verdict to be gained in behalf of the present Lord

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

It would appear then that John was cheated by his own solicitor who was supposed to be acting on his behalf. Sadly corruption was rife at this time and as we shall see later it wouldn't be the last time that dishonesty would raise its ugly head in this matter. John Danvers being a framework knitter, which as we have already noted was a trade very much in decline at this period, was a very poor man indeed. It is another eight years before we find any evidence of how he was planning to get the money and the resources to challenge the Earl of Lanesborough in a court of law. Unlike his father William, he had no one in the family with the money to help him fight the case. As we have seen in the previous chapter he decided to join forces with his brother Richard to try to raise money by authorising John Mason to raise the sum of one hundred pounds. He also asked his eldest son William, of Orchard Street Nottingham, to act on his behalf.

In the meantime they were still collecting further depositions from those witnesses that were still alive to tell the tale and the following statement is typical of them:- *Rothley 30th December 1863*

I William Nurse the son of Jacob Nurse of Swithland, I am 85 years of age, my father worked at Swithland Hall when I was a boy and I worked there also. Sir John Danvers made his will about 8 years before his death and left his property by that will to William Danvers of Sheepshed as was then known by all the Household servants I was present with the servants in the kitchen when Sir John Danvers stated he had made his will and left all his property to William Danvers of Sheepshed. I was a servant in the House.

It is interesting to surmise why it had taken John so long to gather his resources and what had rekindled his determination to contest the legitimacy of George John Danvers Butler Danvers, to give him his full name, to own the Swithland estates. It might be the fact that George John Butler had no offspring by either of his two wives so in the event of his death the estate, being entailed, should go to the eldest surviving male of the Danvers family. Whatever the reason John relied heavily upon his eldest son William, who lived in Nottingham, to start to raise sufficient money to challenge George John Butler once again in court. The following agreement was drawn up by William possibly on the advice of John Mason, John Danvers agent, some time in October. The year is not recorded but it was possibly 1863 or 1864.

Articles of agreement made this day of October between John Danvers of Sheepshed in the County of Leicester framework knitter of the first part, Charles Smith of Sheepshed aforesaid, Baker, Elizabeth Smith of the same place - widow, Frederick Freestone of Nottingham in the County of Notting-

ham, silk weaver, John Danvers the younger of Sheepshed aforesaid stocking maker, Charles Danvers of the same place stocking maker, Thomas Danvers of the same place stocking maker and Henry Danvers of Nottingham aforesaid stocking maker all of the second part. Witnesseth that the said John Danvers party hereto of the first part having been for several years past engaged in prosecuting his suit against George John Danvers Butler Danvers the present Earl of Lanesborough for the recovery of Estates in the County of Leicester which the said John Danvers claims to be entitled to and whereas the parties hereto of the second part have made advances from time to time to the said John Danvers to assist him in the prosecution of his said claim and the said John Danvers being desirous of recognizing such Claim and making provision for the due payment thereof as and when he shall be placed in possession of the Rents and profits of the said Estate has agreed to pay to each of the said parties hereto of the second part the sum of £2,000 to be paid and payable out of the Rents and profits of the said Estate.

Now this agreement witnesseth that he the said John Danvers his heirs Executors administrators and assigns doth hereby covenant and agree to pay to each of the parties hereto of the second part as and when he shall obtain possession of the Estate he is now seeking to recover from the said Earl of Lanesborough the sum of £2,000 to be paid and payable out of one moiety or half part of the Rents and profits of the said Estate as the same shall become due and received by the said John Danvers and paid to the respective parties hereto of the second part or such equal proportionate part thereof as shall be so far as the same shall extend within twenty one days after the receipt thereof and such payments to be a Charge thereon and that all the monies hereby covenanted and agreed to be paid shall be recoverable by way of distress in the same way as rent in arrears. As Witness my hand and seal the day and year above written.

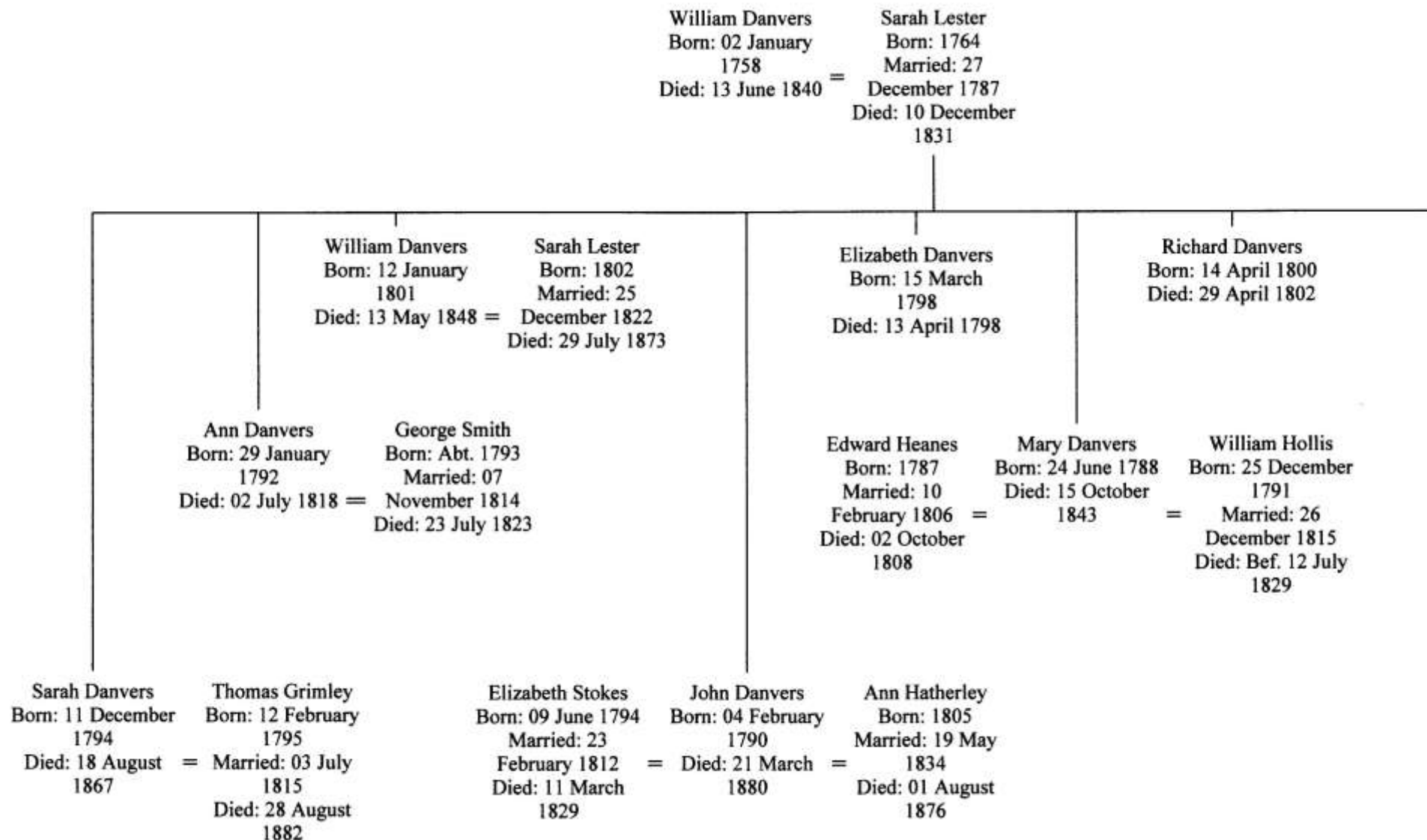
Mr. William Danvers, Orchard Street Nottingham

On the tenth day of February 1864 William issued another agreement to anyone prepared to offer money towards his father's costs as follows:

An Agreement made the tenth day of February one thousand eight hundred and sixty four whereby I William Danvers of Orchard Nottingham Frame Work Knitter as Heir presumptive to my father John Danvers; of Sheepshed, frame work knitter agree to pay out of the Rents from the Estate known as the Swithland Estate in the County of Leicester to which I shall be entitled after the death of my Father the said John Danvers to such person or persons as may assist in raising money to prosecute such Claim for and

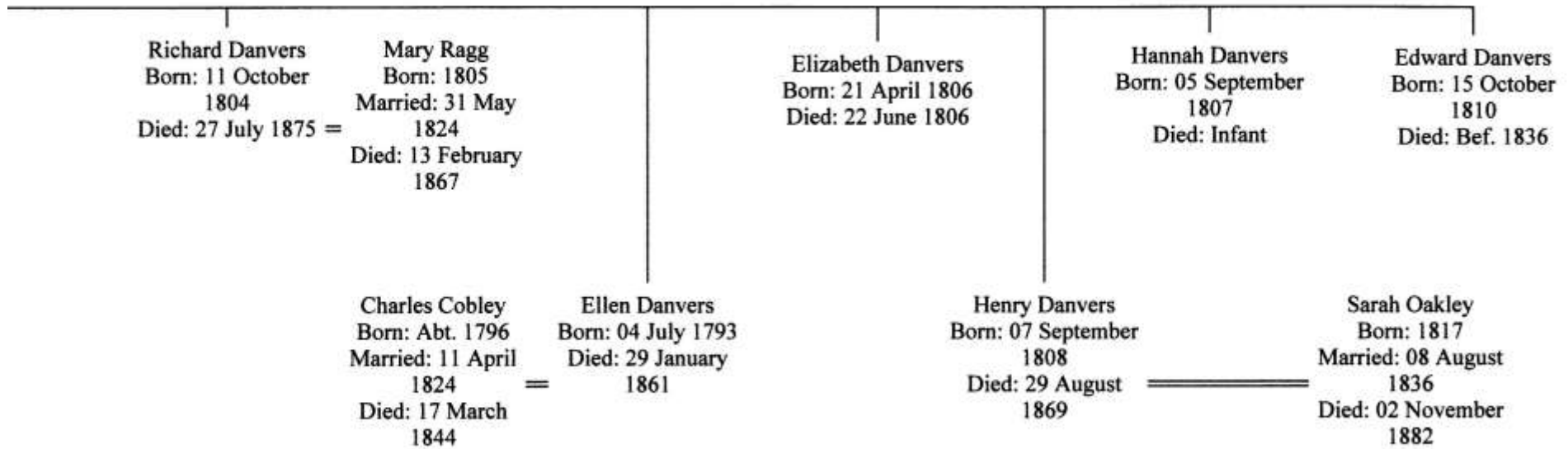
Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants Of William Danvers and Sarah Lester



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants Of William Danvers and Sarah Lester



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Numbers 1 & 3 Pick Street., Shepshed. On the 1841 Census return for Shepshed, John and Ann Danvers are recorded as living at number 1 Pick Street seen on the right.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

on behalf of my Father John Danvers in his life time to such Estate (That is to say) Any person or persons so advancing money for such purpose only shall be paid back to each and every such person or persons so advancing the sum of one hundred pounds such persons shall be paid back in proportion the sum of ten times the amount for such monies as they or either of them may or shall have advanced on our behalf If the property be so recovered. If not recovered then there shall be no liability against me by signing this agreement and it is further agreed by the said William Danvers that in case of the said John Danvers his Father not having paid or Liquidated the said Debt or debts during his life time then the said debts or such part of such debts so unpaid shall be paid from the Rents as become due from the said Estate to the amount only of one fourth part of such Rent so received of the said yearly Rent by the said William Danvers until the same be paid. The amount received not to exceed one hundred pounds. In Witness whereof we the said parties have hereunto set our hands in the presence of John Varney signed John Danvers & William Danvers.

Only five days later William, after receiving a letter from Mr. Mason, his father's lawyer, modified this document by increasing the amount to be borrowed to two hundred pounds and reducing the amount to be paid out to five times the original loan. John Danvers, his brother Richard, his eldest son William and his son-in-law Frederick Freestone appear to have been very successful in their attempts to raise sufficient funds to prosecute John's claim to the Swithland estates through the courts. The sum of money John was said to have was upwards of £2,000, which in terms of today's money equates to almost £120,000. In the meantime John Danvers began to make his claims in earnest. The following document was sent to Keighley and Bull, Solicitors. Mr. Bull was the solicitor that became involved in the case for John Danvers as we shall see later in this chapter.

Victoria by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland Queen Defender of the Faith. To George John Danvers Butler Danvers Earl of Lanesborough John Martin, Charles Martin, Robert Martin, Henry Adderly and Robert Ward and all persons entitled to defend the possession of all that the Manor house known as Swithland Hall and all those pieces or parcels of Land with the messuages, farms, houses, cottages and buildings in the several parishes of Swithland, Mount Sorrell Thurkeston and comprised in and forming the Swithland Estate. Also those Granite Quarries at Mount Sorrell in the County of Leicester also all those that farm with the farm house and buildings in the said Parish of Mount Sorrell in the

said County of Leicester known as the Woodhouse farm. To the possession whereof John Danvers Claims to be entitled and to eject all other persons there from. These are to will and command you or such of you as deny the alleged Title within sixteen days after service hereof to appear in Court of Queens Bench at Westminster to defend the said property or such part thereof as you may be advised in default whereof Judgment may be signed and you turned out of possession. Witness Sir Alexander James Edmund Cockburn Baronet, at Westminster the twenty third day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty four. Queens Bench.

We have no record of whether or not this came to anything but we do have the following document written by Richard Danvers which makes it fairly certain that further action was required.

Dear Sir

I take the liberty to address your Lordship that I am informed you are intending to put in another substitute to possess the Estates of my Forefathers and unless not answered in 7 days or give me an answer of your intention or whether you will give up the estates to my brother John Danvers who I claim to be heir at law for the same estates belonging to the Danvers Family or compromise with me, or as you and me can agree. Or if I get no reply within 7 days I shall then shew the Lord High Chancellor what took place in Herefordshire and elsewhere in substitution and fraud to keep the Danvers family out of their possession and inheritance.

I shall also shew the steps I have taken to recover possession and how I have been kept out by, bribery and Fraud I shall also shew him our lineal descent of blood and I also shew him a deed settled for one thousand years signed by 5 Trustees to keep the heirs of Danvers in possession I shall also shew him who confessed to the burning of the last will made by the last Baronet in his life and burnt after he was dead with all other mischief it contains to keep the right owner out of his inheritance. You can rely on my word if I am not answered in 7 days I shall prove the same to his Lordship. Yours R. Danvers, Sheepshead.

The substitution mentioned in this letter is clarified in more detail in another document written at this time which actually gives us the name of the father of the child and others involved in the substitution:- . . .after the death of the Bart (Sir John Danvers) a child was substituted, purchased to be the natural child of Miss Danvers. The substitution took place at the seat of Lady Strathmore in Herefordshire. Dr. Denman the Father of the late Chief Justice Denman acted as Doctor at the false pretended Birth and that

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the Will was destroyed and a fresh one forged. In this new will the property of which was willed to the daughter then to her husband then to the infant son. That child died at the Lanesborough Estate in the year 1802 at the seat of Lord Lanesborough in Ireland.

The child, the son of Robert Herbert, was substituted as the child of Miss Danvers in its stead then he died in the year 1866 leaving no issue on the death of the late Lord. The Steward Mr. Thos. Miles set a policeman to guard the Hall to keep the Heir at law (John Danvers) from entering to take possession and the said Mr. Miles said that we had no more and he said he would keep us out of that possession We afterwards served Lady Lanesborough with an Ejectment Bill.

The Ejectment Bill referred to in the above document was served on Lady Lanesborough as her husband George John Danvers Butler Danvers had died on the 7th of July 1866 leaving the estates to his nephew John Vansittart Danvers Butler. Even if we accept that George Butler Danvers was of the Danvers bloodline through his mother Mary Danvers, a huge bone of contention with the Danvers family, his nephew John Vansittart was not. His grandmother was Elizabeth Sturt the mistress and later wife of Augustus Richard Butler. It was this more than anything else that persuaded the family to renew their claim to the estates understandably feeling that now, more than ever before, the law would be on their side and the estates would revert back to the Danvers family

This Ejectment Bill was served on the Countess of Lanesborough on the 29th day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty six and reads as follows:- *Victoria by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen defender of the faith to Frederick Emma Countess of Lanesborough and all persons entitled to defend the possession of the messuage and premises called Swithland Hall and the land and grounds and the hereditaments attached situate in the Parish of Swithland in the county of Leicester to the possession Whereof John Danvers claims to be entitled and to eject all other persons there from. These are to will and command you or such of you as deny the alleged title within sixteen days after service here-after to appear in the court of Queens Bench to defend the said property or such part thereof as you may be advised in default whereof judgment may be signed and you turned out of possession. Witness, Sir Alexandra James Edmunds Cockburn Baronet of Westminster.*

Nothing seems to have come from serving the above notice as we find another notice being served on the Countess six months later on the 29th of

March 1867.

To the right Honorable Frederick Emma Countess of Lanesborough I take the opportunity of addressing your Ladyship to inform you that unless you deliver up the possession to me Richard Danvers within 14 days from this day of Swithland Hall and the lands and ground attached thereto as I am the head agent for John Danvers by power and I shall prove his title by law if no answer by the time aforesaid Richard Danvers No 12 Lant Street Sheepshed I have taken great patience on account of your Ladyship being a widow but I shall prosecute by law and can prove the estate entailed on the Danvers family.

In response to statements stating that the Danvers family had had their day in court Richard Danvers replied to his critics in the following manner. *"It has been said by my enemies that we have had a trial in the High Court but when I file a bill in the High Court it will be a bill of Fraud for I can prove it and unless the thing is compromised between you and me by the time mentioned I shall file a bill of Fraud."* We have no record of the person to whom he wrote this statement.

On the previous page we mentioned Mr. Bull, the solicitor, who was acting for John Danvers we believe at the behest of John Mason as he was regularly in contact with him. Below are just four of the many letters we have that were written at this time. The first letter, as usual for a solicitor, is a request for money :-

My dear Sir,

16 Bucklesbury 18th March 1864

You wished Mr. Bull not to make the application until he received the money and instructions, so that no step has yet been taken as regards the application. The Action is going on. It is of no use the witnesses coming up by the Excursion Train because the days you mention are almost all holidays in the Law and Equity Courts, besides which there is hardly time now to get what is necessary done by that time, as it will take some few days to get the documents necessary and until the application comes before the Judge we do not know what order will he name as to the examination, therefore you had better let Mr. Bull have the £4 and the £10 which I suppose you will have from Mr. Freestone as soon as you can, I want the solicitors to have confidence that the money will be found and if you send them another £20 that will give them confidence and I think will do us to the time of the trial when they will what more for Counsels fees with briefs. I will see that no time is lost and if you will send the money I will hasten the matter all I can, so tell the parties it is for their own interests that I urge this being done.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The family of Charles and Mary Danvers. Reading from left to right on the back row are Sarah Ann Greasley, Elizabeth Danvers & Charles William. Front two rows, Arthur, Mary with Emma on her knee, William, Mary's father James Harris with Harris, John Henry with his father Charles and Ernest on his father's knee. We believe the photograph was taken either late 1883 or early 1884 as Emma was born in May 1883 and would appear to be less than a year old.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

I will write fully about the witnesses when I know you have done this. I have been working hard in the matter myself Hoping I shall hear satisfactory from you as to this and the Codes.

I remain yours faithfully, W Stanley

The money requested in the above letter, a total of £34, which in today's money would be worth almost £1,500. A staggering amount for that day and age at a time when most framework knitters were finding it difficult to put food on their table. The average wage for a knitter being only seven shillings and six pence a week, in old money. Mr. Freestone mentioned in the above letter is the son-in-law of the claimant, John Danvers. Frederick Freestone is also mentioned in an article of agreement on page 75.

The following letter from Mr. Mason refers to the research he has been doing on behalf of John Danvers and how the case is beginning to progress.

Dear Sir, 73 Bassinghall City London 22 April 1864

Mr. Bull was much pleased with the evidence. I have been with Mr. Stanley he says it is a great pity that evidence had not been sent before. An affidavit will have to be made by myself and one for yourself I am in hopes of informing you shortly how things will be. I have collected the whole of the information in Clapham Churchyard. I have found the Will of Dame Mary Danvers the mother of Mary Danvers. She does not leave Butler one farthing. She gives her property to her daughter Mary and after her death to her son George John Butler-Danvers, and in case he does not live then to her cousins Thorntons absolutely. But she does not speak of any lands, only money and bonds which it will be very difficult to find out. I am sure we shall succeed. Please to take the papers which are in the cupboard marked London and make a parcel of them on in the morning to John Pollard at Ansty as he has to forward a parcel from Mr. Sketchley to your solicitor Mr. Bull as he will take the same to the Railway Station to be sent to Mr. Bull, 73 Bassinghall Street, City London.

Yours respectfully, John Mason

In the next letter we see another solicitor, Mr. Stanley, being concerned about a book that Mr. Sketchly had in his possession. We have to assume it was a book that contained all the details of the depositions, statements and documentation relating to the work that Sketchly had done with Elizabeth Stanfield for William Danvers and we believe this book may be known to us as part of the Twells papers. It was obviously vitally important to the forthcoming court case that Bull was building for John Danvers as it is constantly referred to in several letters.

Dear Sir,

Yourself and Lanesborough.

16 Bucklesbury 13 May 1864

Mr. Mason is coming to Leicester tomorrow on Sunday and Mr. Bull wishes me to accompany him for the purpose of seeing the parties and also seeing Dr Sketchly with respect to the book which he will not give up. So I suppose I must spare the time and come down.,

Yours faithfully, W Stanley

Then again in another letter dated the 12th of July 1864 the same request is made concerning this book. This time the approach will be made to Mr. Sketchly's daughter in the hope that she might lay her hands on the book.

Dear Mason,

It will be necessary for you to get the book from Miss Sketchley - Mr. Bull will write to her when he knows you are at Sheepshead requesting and asking as a favour that she will hand it to you. It will also be necessary that you should get up what further evidence you can as to the indemnities having been given and generally on the case. Upon the first day of next term the court will be moved for the trial to take place in London. You will have to make an affidavit in support. I am persuaded the Full Court will grant the application in about a weeks time.

I will send down the advice of counsel as to what evidence will be required which you must try to procure whilst you are there, or Mr. Danvers can. When you want any money you can write and let me know.

Yours faithfully, W Stanley

By now events were coming to a head; an action had been filed in the High Court and John Danvers and his family were beginning to feel that at long last justice would be on their side and the Swithland estates once more back in the hands of the Danvers family. A further reason why they felt so confident was the fact that John Danvers had taken possession of the school in Mountsorrel which had been founded by Sir Joseph Danvers. To find out what actually happened next we need to read the following account written by Charles William Danvers, the grandson of John Danvers who wrote the following:-

This said school was founded in 1742 by Sir Joseph Danvers, Bart of Swithland, with house and garden and £9 a year for the master, Mr. George Danvers, in consideration of which he teaches reading, writing and arithmetic to 12 poor boys appointed by the Lord of the Manor. George Danvers died intestate and left no issue at his death. It reverted to the estates and was successfully claimed by the said claimant, John Danvers, when the school

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was discontinued some years afterwards owing to the erection of a National School in the village. John Danvers took possession of it as a test to prove that he was the natural and lawful heir to the estates left by the late Sir John Danvers, Bart of Swithland, and as far as I at present remember having heard his claim to the property was either not contested or that it was contested and the action failed.

What strengthens this was that about this time he was granted action of writs to be served on those who were not legally gaining possession of those estates amongst which one has been served on Lord Lanesborough. Also according to a statement made by my father Charles Danvers son of the claimant John Danvers, who had much to do with the correspondence in this matter said about the time spoken of a sudden change was taken by Mr. Bull (the solicitor) in the affairs by demanding immediately a considerable amount of money towards the cost of the trial and which he stated was likely to be heavy with a good guarantee for the remainder of the costs were he unsuccessful in his claim. As this demand could not be met at the time further action in this matter ceased.

I previously mentioned according to Mrs. Clarke Nuttall's Leicester and District the Hon: Richard Augustus Butler when he took possession sold the estates left to Sir Joseph Danvers for life and his son Sir John Danvers in tail by the John Danvers of Prescote in Oxfordshire the same property alluded to by Sir John on the stone he erected to himself in Swithland church during his life. Richard Butler or his successors also sold the Roecliffe estate to Sir William Heygate which Paul Dare in his Charnwood Forest says Roecliffe Hall lies to the West of Swithland wood and the small manor is an appendage of Swithland. Sir William Heygate who was also the Lord Mayor of London in 1823 bought the property from the Danvers family. He built the Hall, which was enlarged into the present charming place by his son, Sir Frederick William Heygate.

Also from the same source about the same time Mr. Perry Herrick of Beaumanor, Woodhouse purchased likewise a considerable amount of property which also belonged to the Danvers family. Both Sir William Heygate and Mr. Perry Herrick being aware that the purchase of this property was an illegal purchase in the eyes of the law from it having been by deeds of 1431 and 1753 strictly entailed on the heirs male of the Danvers family became afraid when the claimant John Danvers gained possession of the Mountsorrel School House thereby proving his title to the lands in question and more particularly so when he commenced serving writs respecting the

said lands. Also some few days previous to the solicitor asking for a substantial sum towards the cost of the trial, which demand as I have already said could not be met at the time, a meeting was held at Beaumanor in which amongst others was Lord Lanesborough, Sir William Heygate, Mr. Perry Herrick (whose seat it was) and the said Thomas Bull. The object of the meeting which shortly afterwards became publicly known was to try and stop the trial from coming at all costs and it is said for the purpose the claimants solicitor, Thomas Bull, was invited and the large sum of £10,000 was offered and accepted by him to retire from it.

Unfortunately with his retirement from the case went the deeds of the Mountsorrel School House and other valuable papers in connection with the Swithland affair which had taken much time and money to procure. To this the meaning was quite clear John Danvers had been let down and cheated in a most shameful fashion for they knew failure was not thought of but they knew at the same time that he was cleared out of funds and better by far a good round sum to them than a less sum with a slight risk attached, although so much was at stake. Whilst John Danvers the claimant then a man of 77 and practically penniless was unable to attempt restitution although he lived to the age of 90 dying in 1880.

So the long drawn out affair of the Swithland fraud came to a very sad and ignominious end. The Shepshed Danvers family had been cheated twice out of their rightful inheritance by duplicitous and grasping lawyers. As to John Danvers himself, unfortunately he came to something of a sticky end, quite literally in one sense, at the age of 90 years. This incident was of sufficient interest to warrant a mention in the Leicester Advertiser on Thursday the 25th of March 1880:-

On Thursday March 18th John Danvers aged 90, a Framework Knitter, fell into a sewerage drain and died from the effects on the following Sunday, medical aid being of no use to him.

John Danvers therefore dying on the 21st of March 1880.

As we have mentioned before the determination to see the Swithland property back in the hands of the rightful owner continued into the fourth generation with Charles William Danvers the son of Charles Danvers who in turn was the son of John Danvers the claimant. In the next chapter we will be looking closely at the findings of all the research that Charles William did in one last determined effort to prove once and for all that the Swithland estates were legally the property of the Danvers family of Shepshed.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Numbers 16 & 18 Leicester Road, Shepshed. According to the 1881 Census Charles and Mary Danvers lived at number 16 where the property on the left now stands.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Shepshed 1839 - 1925

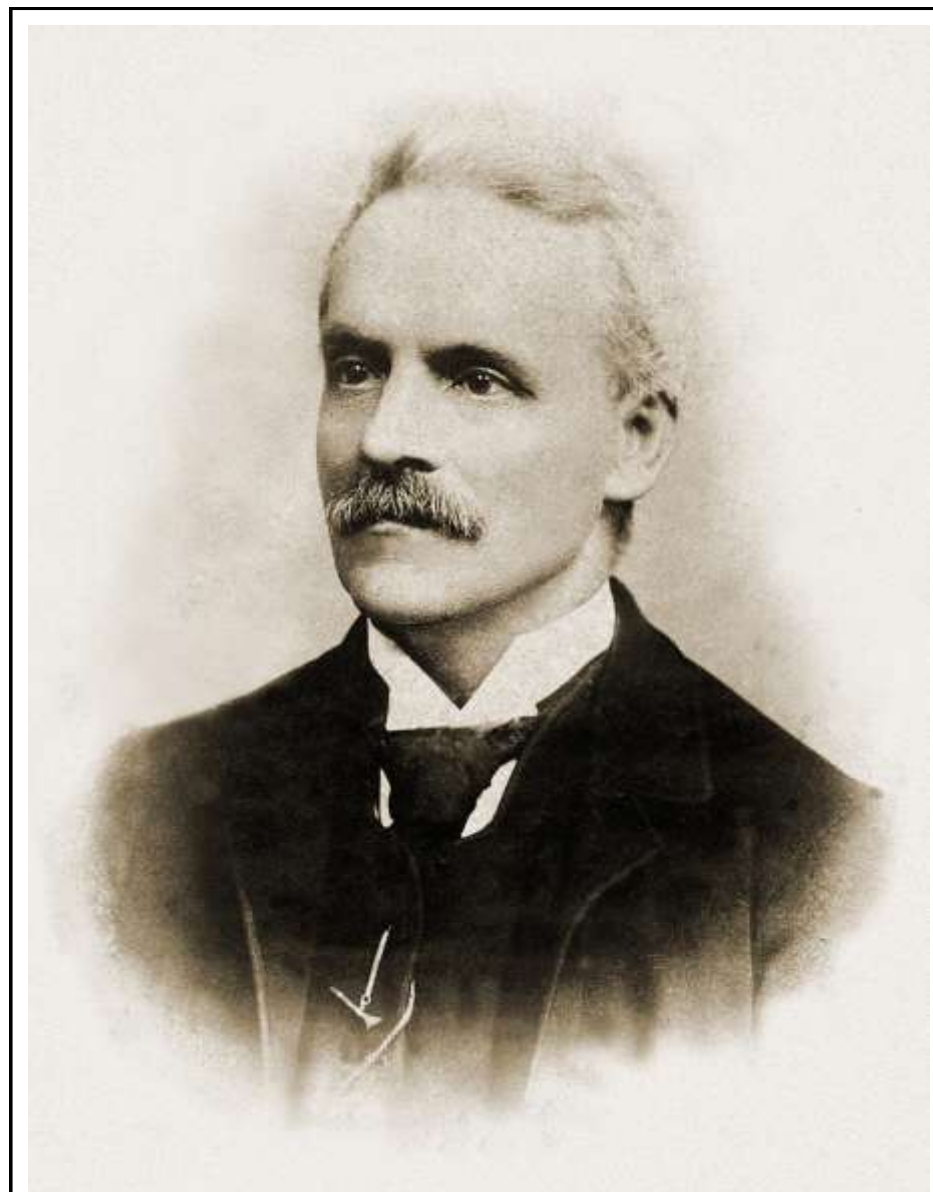
Before discussing the writings and research of Charles William Danvers, we must begin this chapter with his father Charles Danvers the fourth eldest son of John Danvers as mentioned previously on page 72 in chapter six.

Charles Danvers was born on the 20th of April 1839. Like his father he became a framework knitter. He married Sarah Hartshorne on the 4th of July 1865. Sarah gave birth to a daughter Sarah Ann on the 5th May 1867. Very sadly the mother died only three months later on the 17th of August 1867, her daughter Sarah dying a month later on the 24th of September 1867. Charles doesn't appear to have been too disheartened by this tragedy as only three months later he had met and married Mary Harris Greasley on the 24th of December 1867. He and Mary went on to have ten children.

The eldest, Elizabeth, was born on the 1st of August 1869. She became a framework knitter like her father. She married Ernest Kerry, a baker who was born in Englefield in Berkshire on the 27th of November 1900. Ernest pursued several different trades during his lifetime including being a boiler smith and an engineer as well as a baker. Elizabeth gave birth to their only child just five months after the wedding, a son named William, who was born on the 28th of April 1901 He went on to marry Sarah Ann Clarke on the 31st of March 1923.

A very unusual story was told to the author about William Kerry by an elderly aunt, Florence Willson, nee Danvers, the granddaughter of Charles Danvers, who was the best friend of Sarah and was also a bridesmaid at their wedding. The story goes as follows: Sarah approached Florence one day a few years after the wedding and asked Florence if she would mind helping her to make their bed. Florence was taken aback slightly by the request but agreed to do it with her. After making the bed Sarah asked Florence if she had noticed anything untoward whilst making the bed.

Florence thought about this for a moment and told her that she hadn't, thinking she meant blood stains or something similar. Sarah then told Florence that she was terribly worried about Billy, as he was known, as she kept seeing a dark figure hovering over the bed every time she made it. Naturally Florence tried to reassure Sarah by telling her that it was a figment of her imagination. However not long after this incident, according to Florence, Billy died on the 22nd of February 1928 aged only 27. Sarah's pre-



Charles Danvers, a framework knitter, born on the 20th of April 1839

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

monition becoming a dreadful reality. Charles and Mary's second eldest child was Charles William born on the 3rd of January 1871. Charles married Minnie Elizabeth Nicholls on the 25th of October 1901 and had five children. We will be returning to this family later.

James Harris Danvers was the third child born to Charles and Mary. He was born towards the end of 1872 and died only a couple of months later on the 2nd of February 1873. The next child to be born was William in the Spring of 1874. He was baptised on the 5th of April 1874. He married Maria Freeman on the 27th of September 1897. William moved from Shepshed to find work in the Boot & Shoe industry in Anstey. His wife Maria gave birth to four children. The eldest Charles Freeman was born in Kirk Hill, Shepshed and baptised on the 11th of December 1898.

Before his marriage to Florence Palmer on the 19th September 1924 Charles was a senior wireless operator and served on the S.S. Tutshill from December 12th 1918 to June 12th 1919. He sailed frequently to New York between the years 1917 and 1921. After his marriage he inherited a small general grocery store in New Bridge Street, which is now demolished, from Sarah Anne & Catherine Freeman, his mother's sisters. The two sisters went to live in Hazel Street close by. Charles and Florence had a daughter Joyce Madeleine born on the 26th of September 1925. She married Neville Kenneth Ellson on the 26th of July 1952. They had no children.

The next child to be born to William and Maria were twins, Florence Ann Freeman and Constance Mary Greasley, on the 29th of May 1901 in Sullington Road, Shepshed. They were both baptised on the 7th of July 1901. Constance, although much the stronger of the two children, died on the 6th of January 1903. Her sister Florence took ill soon after and was not expected to live by her doctor but her mother kept applying brandy to her lips with a feather and she pulled through living to the wonderful age of 96.

Florence, who was the source of the story on page 87, married Ernest Arthur St. Clare Willson on the 7th of June 1938 at the Church of the Martyrs on Westcotes Drive, Leicester. There were no children from this marriage. William Thomas Franklin was William and Maria's fourth and last child. He was born on the 19th of October 1906 and baptised on the 2nd of December. He married Gertrude May Summerfield on the 04 August 1935. They had two boys, firstly the author of this epistle, Anthony Peter and two years later James Michael Danvers.

As the Boot and Shoe industry started to falter William Danvers and his sons opened a butcher's shop in the Nook in Anstey. Then when his eld-



Mary Harris Greasley, wife of Charles Danvers, born on the 26th of April 1842

est son, Charles left to take charge of the grocer's shop he moved with his son Franklin and opened a butcher's shop on Fosse Road South in Leicester.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

William and Maria Danvers later went to live with their daughter Florence and her husband Ernest Willson on Harrow Road, Leicester

The next child of Charles and Mary Danvers' marriage was Arthur, born on the 4th of September 1875, he was baptised on the 10th of October 1875. He left Shepshed and moved to Barwell to work in the Boot and Shoe industry. He married Florence Annie Grewcock on the 1st of January 1907. She was born in Barwell on the 25th of March 1882. Arthur served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve from the 24th of July 1917 until the 23rd of January 1919.

They had the following five children. Firstly John Reginald Danvers born on the 6th June 1907. He married Henrietta Ann Fox on the 29th of July 1933: they had 4 children, Elizabeth Mary, Ann, Margaret, and John Nicholas. The second child Charles Archibald was born on the 10th of December 1909. He later emigrated to Australia on the 28th of March 1926. His occupation was that of a saddler. He married Grace Siepe four years after reaching Australia on the 25th of June 1930. They had five children, namely Garnet John, Adeline Grace, Bethel June, Torold Charles and finally Shirley Margaret.

The third child of Arthur and Florence was Iris, born in Barwell on the 25th of January 1913. She met and married Ernest John Mowl a policeman from Nottingham. Ernest was later to die in WWII on the 9th of October 1944 and was buried in the Courtrai Communal Cemetery, St. Jean, Belgium. He was awarded the Kings Police Medal. Iris and Ernest had one daughter Judith Ann Mowl, one of the main researchers of this book without whom it would not have been written.

Gwendoline May was the fourth child born to Arthur and Florence on the 1st of August 1915. She worked as a telephonist and married Kenneth Alan Baker, a printer, in the Hinckley Registry Office on the 31st of July 1937. They had two children, a boy and a girl, John and Madeline. The last child born to Arthur and Florence was Doreen Nancie born on the 22nd of December 1920. She was a teacher in Barwell and married her husband James Joseph Boyd on the 09 November 1946 in the Registry office at Leicester. James came over from Ireland to a monastery in Whitwick to train as a monk. By the age of 19 he had had enough and packed his bags and left. He then joined the Police in Barwell, where he met Doreen Nancie. When he was in his 80's he was alert in mind and a confirmed atheist, but prior to his death he rejoined the Catholic Church. No children are recorded from this marriage.

The sixth child to be born to Charles and Mary was Harris Danvers. He was born on the 11th of March 1877. Harris taught the piano and was also the organist at the Shepshed Church and the Oaks in Charnwood Church, He may also have played at the Belton Street Chapel in Shepshed. He married Joan Elizabeth Harrington on the 20th November 1900 and had six children. The following item was reported in the Leicester Chronicle (Shepshed) on the 18th of September 1900 under the heading of local studies -

'At the recent examination held by the London College of Music, Mr. Harris Danvers, son of Mr. Charles Danvers, of Leicester Road - gained a diploma of A. Mus. L..C. .M. Mr. Danvers was a pupil of Dr. Briggs.'

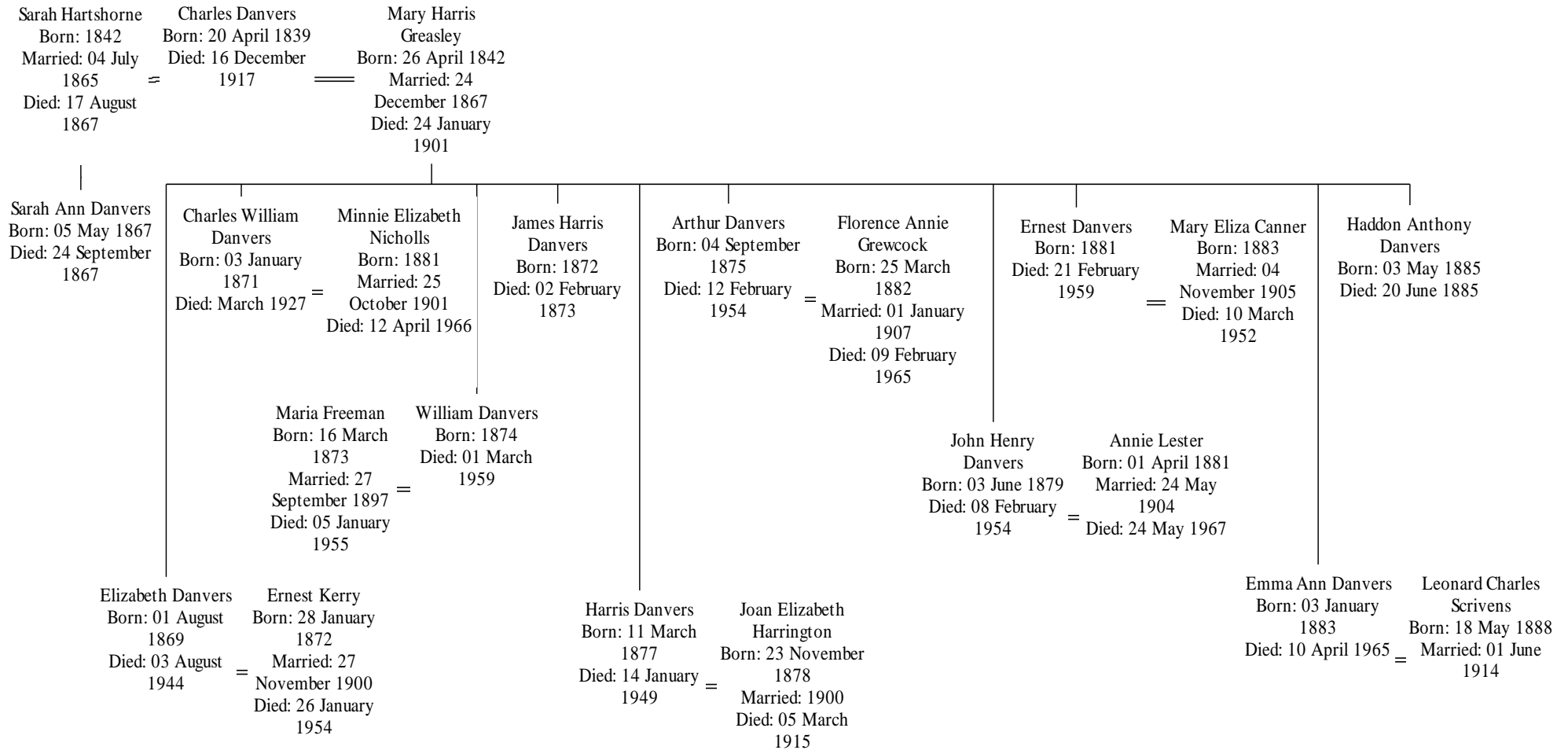
Harris also gained a World War I Campaign Medal whilst serving in the York and Lancashire Regiment. He enlisted on the 10th of December 1915 into the 18th Battalion of the Yorks and Lancashire Regiment. Harris named his father Charles as next of kin as his wife had died, prior to his enlistment, on the 5th March 1915. Harris listed his dependants as Evelyn May, Cecil, Horace, Sidney and Charles Lawrence and gave his marriage date as 20.11.1900. Harris served in France and was discharged on the 17th of March 1919

Harris and Joan had six children. First of all were twins, Evelyn May and Leonard Danvers born on the 1st of March 1902. Evelyn was 29 years old when she married Leonard Gibson on the 11th of July 1931. Having no children of their own they adopted a girl named Ann. Sadly Evelyn's twin brother Leonard died an infant. The third child was Cecil born on the 2nd of February 1905. He married Mary Unwin on the 20th of June 1931 and they had two children, Iris and Audrey. Cecil was followed by Horace Benedict Danvers born on the 12th of May 1907. He married Alice May Davie on the 26th of March 1932 and they had two sons Charles and Noel. Alice used to have piano lessons with Harris so may have met her future husband Horace whilst having lessons with his father, which she eventually gave up.

The fifth child born to Harris and Alice Danvers was Charles born on the 9th of May 1909. He married Phyllis Alma Haken on the 27th of November 1937. They had two daughters Carole and Sandra. The last child of the six was Sydney born on the 8th of February 1915. According to his wife Emma May - Sydney always felt responsible for his mother's death, as he was born February 1915 and his mother Joan nee Harrington died on the 5th of March 1915. Sydney was brought up by his mother's, brother's wife, his Aunt Sarah Jane Harrington nee Hewitt, until he was four years old. Sydney was then returned to his father, Harris Danvers.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Descendants of Charles Danvers



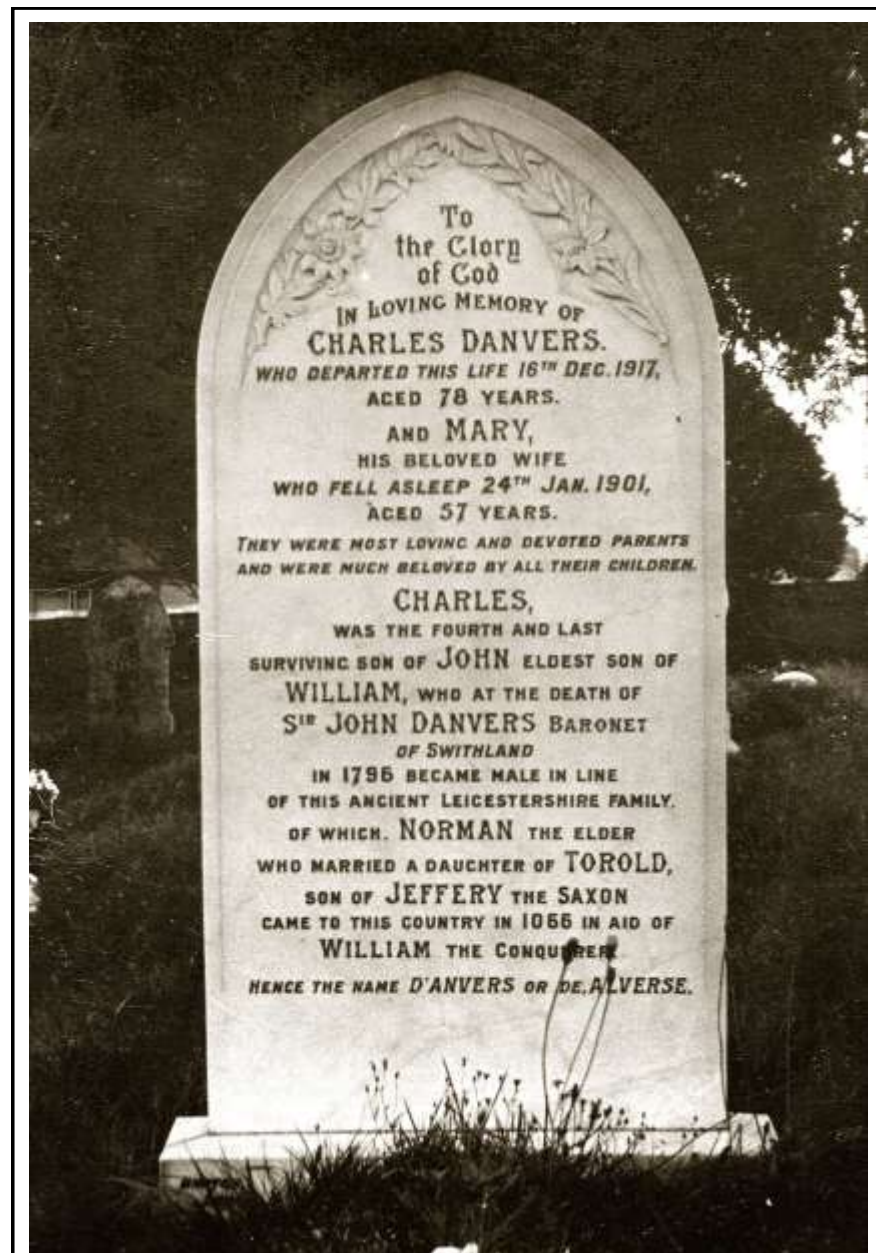
Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

John Henry Danvers was the seventh child to be born to Charles and Mary. Born on the 3rd of June 1879, he married Annie Lester on the 24th of May 1904. Their wedding photograph is on the back cover of this book. They lived at number 18 Hall Croft in Shepshed together with their two boys Charles born on the 5th of May 1905 and John Lester born on the 18th of February 1909. The two brothers met and married two sisters. John Lester married Lois Ann Lakin and Charles married Elizabeth Clarice Lakin.

The eighth child born to Charles and Mary was Ernest, born in 1881. Ernest trained to be a teacher and in the Leicester Chronicle dated September 16th 1899 we read the following: *The report of the June examination of the pupil teachers of the National Schools on Religious Knowledge included 2nd. Class, Ernest Danvers.* On the 4th of November 1905 Ernest married Mary Eliza Canner who was born in Sutton Bonnington. Recorded on the Teachers Registration Council, date of Registration 1.8.1920 reg. number 47724, Ernest gained an Attainments Board of Education Certificate. Ernest also attained the Royal Horticultural Society's 1st Class Gardening Diploma. Ernest and Mary Eliza appear in the spring register of the 1924 Parliamentary Loughborough Division under Leicester Road. They had one son named Blunstone born on the 7th of October 1910. Blunstone married Nellie Vernam Goodacre on the 19th of September 1936.

Ernest had a long and distinguished career in education as may be seen from his C.V. He was Assistant Master at the Shepshed School, Leicestershire from 1900 to 1902, Senior Assistant Master at the Church Gate Council School, Loughborough 1902 to 1918. For a short time he was Head Master at the Griffydam Council School, Leicestershire from 1918 until 1919. Then he became Senior Assistant Master at the All Saints School in Coalville in 1919. He was also the Senior Assistant Master at the Griffydam Council School, Leicester from 1919 to 1930, finally becoming the Senior Assistant Master at the Sibleby Senior Council School, Leicestershire in 1930. Mary Eliza Canner died on the 10 March 1952. Ernest dying seven years later in the Leicester Royal Infirmary on the 21st of February 1959. Coincidentally, and unknown to either of the two families, his brother William was also there at the same time dying a week later on the 1st March 1959.

The next child to be born to Charles and Mary was Emma Ann Danvers born on the 3rd of January 1883. She like many of her brothers worked in the Boot and Shoe industry as a shoe hand trimmer. She was 31 years old when she married Leonard Charles Scrivens on the 1st day of June 1914. Leonard was a collier from Bardon Hill; his father Henry was a blacksmith



Charles Danvers headstone in Shepshed Cemetery on Charnwood Road

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Elizabeth Danvers & William



Charles William Danvers



Ernest Danvers



Arthur Danvers



Harris Danvers



John & Annie Danvers



William Danvers



Emma Danvers

The eight surviving offspring of the family of Charles Danvers and Mary Harris Greasley

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

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Charles William Danvers, painter and historian, son of Charles Danvers

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The S.S. Umbria

1901 and had five children by her. The eldest Charles Oliver Danvers was born in Shardlow in 1902. He married Edith Jocose Reynolds in 1925 and died aged 71 in Surrey Hills Australia. No children are recorded from this marriage. Charles and Minnie's second child was Mary Violet Danvers born in Shardlow in 1903. She married Cyril Tunnicliffe in Derby in 1929 and they had one son named Philip. Minnie and Charles' third child was John Benjamin Danvers born on the 18th of January 1906 in Derby. He married Lillian Emily Christie in 1932 and they had two boys, John and Nicholas. John Benjamin died on the 18th of November 1971 in Eastbourne; his wife Lillian dying 19 years later on the 29th of May 1990 in Slough.

The fourth child was Margaret Elizabeth Danvers born in 1908. She married Percy Alan Kibbey in 1935, again no children are recorded from this marriage. The fifth and final child born to Charles and Minnie was Ellis. He was born in Derby on the 28th of September 1910. He married Emma Mary Irene Hall on the 29th of February 1936 and they had one daughter Ann and two sons, John and Guy.

Charles William Danvers is extremely important in the history of the Danvers family as he produced the notes and letters referring to the Estates of Sir John Danvers. He was an historian who was particularly interested in trying to prove the fraud he believed was perpetrated by the Lanesborough family in order to inherit the Swithland estates.

According to Florence Danvers (see page 87) he spent a lot of time at their home in Anstey whilst looking around Swithland Church trying to find evidence of the fraud. He was also an art teacher producing many oil paintings for the family. He also sailed the seven seas and his telescope is now in the possession of Torold Danvers of the Australian Branch of the family. On the New York Passenger lists from 1820 until 1957, we see that on the 22nd of September 1894 he arrived in New York from Liverpool on board the Umbria.

We have already quoted several times from his notes on the Swithland Estates, notes which he had assiduously written down in a vain attempt to try once and for all to find direct evidence that a fraud had been perpetrated by the Lanesborough family. He had access to a few of the previous records from his father and spent a lot of time in the church at Swithland looking for evidence. Most of the records went to America with John, the eldest son of John Danvers and Ann Hatherley. These were passed down through the family until June Danvers, whose husband was John's grandson, presented a typed and bound copy to the Record Office in Wigston, Leicestershire.

The notes Charles produced are many and varied but for the purposes of this book we have taken some of the more interesting details which are most relevant to our present research. The author remembers his aunt Florence Willson, nee Danvers, telling him many years ago that Charles, who lived in Derby at the time, stayed with her family for a while in the Danvers butcher's shop in the Nook at Anstey whilst he looked for evidence of the fraud in Swithland Church and in the Shepshed registers. Florence told the author that Charles was trying to discover whether the Swithland and Shepshed Church registers had been tampered with. She also mentioned that Charles was trying to find a vault containing burials of the Danvers family. We now continue with Charles' own words.

Now to get back to the exposure of 1829 when the first intimation of a fraud in the case became publicly known and when followed the tampering of the Swithland and Shepshed Church registers, the Pedigree Plates and tombstones in Swithland Church and the destruction of the Title Deeds. Like most people connected with cases of this description I had recourse to the various registers, biographies, histories and suchlike, likely to help me in my search. I might add here that quite a number of years back Charles Danvers (my father) born 1839 and son of John Danvers, the claimant alluded to, gave me what papers he had relating to the case and also such information as I had at that time with respect to the interference of the early Church

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The interior of Swithland Church, the Danvers Chapel is on the right.

Registers and suchlike and doubting myself that anything like this could have been done with such impunity in such recent years too.

I decided then to personally make enquiries myself at some time or other in the near future. Eventually I wrote to the Rector (the Reverend John Murray Dixon) of Swithland, who has just recently resigned the living, asking permission to go through the church. He kindly granted me this and at the time I made a thorough investigation such as had to do with the family of Danvers. In the way of monuments and all of which at that time was in the private chapel. This was July 1919 a short time afterwards I again called to see the Rector but this time for the purpose of ascertaining the condition of the Registers and to see if what I had already heard respecting them was true. In the conversation I had with him I said I had heard that the Swithland Church Registers at some time or other had been willfully torn and mutilated and portions missing from them. Without any hesitation whatsoever on his part he produced the Old Registers with the remark, "here's what's left of them!" I said to him that I always thought Church Registers were kept in a safe or chest in some secured place or other in the church. He went on to say that it was so. In this case they were formerly kept in a strong chest in the church and he related how someone or other, from what he had heard, had willfully broken into the chest and taken portions from it leaving it in the condition you see it at present. And this was at the time the Title Deeds were supposed to have been destroyed in the fire at the Old Hall.

I told him that I had heard that the original deeds of Swithland and other properties belonging to the Danvers Family had been destroyed. With this he said, "some years ago when I had occasion to lay claim to some Glebe land belonging to the Church, I found that there were no title deeds to this or the adjoining property (Swithland). I had to apply for particulars to the See of Lincoln." With this I said "Mr. Dixon I feel more convinced that you could enlighten me a great deal about this Danvers matter." "Well," he continued jokingly, "I could give you information that would be the means of your family regaining the property, what would you give me, say half?" "But," I said, "do you think there is any real chance of recovery," "Possibly," he said. Maybe he was referring to the Earl of Lanesborough, who like his father before him, is there waiting to be fetched out!

In conclusion I asked would he allow me to go through these old registers along with him. "With pleasure," he remarked, "but to save time, if it is with reference to any particular entry or entries you are in search of, I have a printed duplicate here where the whole can be seen almost at a

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Wedding photograph of William Kerry and Sarah Ann Clarke taken on the 31st of March 1923. Florence Danvers is the bridesmaid on the left of the picture.

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glance and by doing this," he said, "shall be better able to preserve the remains of the original." Glancing over the printed duplicate and seeing but one entry in the name of Danvers recording the death of Elizabeth, widow of William, I remarked, "you don't appear to have many of the name of Danvers registered here." "No," he says, "not when considering the years they resided here!"

I had remarked to the Rev. Murray Dixon respecting the Swithland Church Registers, that I was convinced that he knew a great deal about the Danvers matter. I had seen it in the Daily Mail about the year 1909 where the present Lord Lanesborough had unsuccessfully sued the Reverend Murray Dixon, Rector of Swithland, for a return of £2,000 which had been a deed of gift from the late Lord Lanesborough who died in 1905. Although I had not read any of the details of the case myself I have heard it remarked by others that the reverend gentleman had said should there be any pressure brought to bear on him for the return of this money he should make publicly known the secret of why this money was given to him. It was also said that he demanded a public letter of apology from Lord Lanesborough through this action. A copy of this letter of apology by Lord Lanesborough appeared in the Loughborough Monitor towards the close of 1909. Charles then went on to itemise the contents of the registers and to note the years that were missing. He later went to Shepshed and asked to see the Church Registers and here again he is convinced, by what he sees, that they have been altered.

The tamperings of the Shepshed Church Registers are with respect to entries of William Danvers, son of Henry and Ann Danvers of Swithland who rented a small farm from a Mr. Chester in Sheepshead (now Shepshed). This same farm is situate opposite to the Old Windmill. This son William and his great grandson William are as follows:-

William Danvers (day labourer) and Ellen Lacy were married by banns August the 8th 1703. Richard Danvers baptised October 9th 1704 son of William Danvers day labourer. William son of William and Helen Danvers baptised July 5th 1758. In the former it will be seen that day labourer has been added firstly over the top and secondly at the end of the entries. In the last born is in the entry but scratching has apparently been attempted to erase it but was eventually crossed out and baptised entered over the top. In both cases of the day labourer and the baptism entry it is most noticeably of a different ink and handwriting to the entries.

Another entry which I found as recent as the 22nd of June 1926 when looking through these registers with Mr. Wood, the Verger, was one to

Katherine, widow of John Danvers buried the ninth of August 1693. This looks of very recent occurrence and where the John Danvers is in the entry appears very murky whilst the ink stands out rather boldly and when this part of the page is held up to the light it is shown to be very thin from a very bad erasure undoubtedly where the John Danvers is now in this entry was some other name where this was written.

Although I have been in the Danvers Chapel in Swithland several times previous to the 20th of June 1924 I had not seen independent of those on the wall only the one to the fifth Earl of Lanesborough and his wife and that where I should have expected to have seen some signs individually respecting the five young children of Sir John and Dame Mary Danvers whose monument is erected over at the foot of it. Even the blue Stone of history, marking the spot where the body of Sir John Danvers lay, I had not been able to discover nor the stone to Francis Danvers who died 1697, which was recorded in Nichols History of Leicestershire.

On seeing things like this Charles naturally concluded that the burying ground had been interfered with. He noted that the previous five generations of the true Swithland Danvers together with their wives and their children was in total 53 persons. Charles knew that one of them, William, was buried in the Shepshed churchyard, Joseph and his wife lay in the new vault in the Swithland church yard and Henry Danvers lay buried in Utrecht in Holland. This meant to Charles that up to 49 persons must surely be lying somewhere in Swithland Church but he found nothing which pointed actually to the spot where each or anyone of them lay. This seemed to Charles to be very strange and he came to the conclusion that something was being hidden and that its object was obviously in conjunction with the falsified pedigrees and the outrage on the Church Register. With reference to the falsified pedigrees, Charles compared those pedigrees mentioned in Nichols History and the brass plates in Swithland Church and came to the following conclusion:

Throsby, also, in his work refers to Sir John having put up a brass in Swithland Church giving his pedigree from the time of the Conquest. There is one there now, or was a short time ago, but I have many doubts as to it being the original one. If so it is a direct lie to some of the brasses in the same Chapel. It has a weak, mixed up, impoverished look about it, as if it might have been wanted in great haste, and its object, confusion and deceit. I think here lies one of the worst frauds of the whole business, accompanied by the destruction of the whole of the Title Deeds and the mutilation of the Church Register. On this basis it gives Henry Danvers as having married, 1664,

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The Memorial Stone to Sir John Danvers Baronet erected prior to his death

Anne, 3rd daughter of Sir Joseph Cook, Knight, Melbourne and mentions, but one child, Samuel, out of his seven children. Whilst in truth he married Anne, the third daughter of Sir John Coke, Secretary of State, Melbourne, Derbyshire, 1644.

At this point Charles played a waiting game hoping to find out whether there was any truth in his suspicions. The first opportunity to test his theory out came in the June of 1924, when he heard that Swithland Church was closed for repairs. Continuing with Charles notes we read the following:

On June 20th 1924 I got a permit to go into the church and I found that the body of the church floor had been lowered at that time about 9 inches also that the steps leading up into the chapel which formerly stood some 18 inches above that of the church floor had been removed, whilst the tiles used for the facing of the 18 inch wall from the said church floor to that of the chapel had also been taken away. By this I was able to make a search along the edge of the chapel floor and after careful observation and by removing a little loose sand, which had apparently been used for filling up a small space under the Lanesborough family pew, I came across a white stone which had every appearance of a tombstone. I was able to get my hand some distance under the pew and as I could trace letters on it with my fingers. I felt quite satisfied that what I had surmised respecting the concealment of tombstones under the chapel floor was correct and that the white stone referred to was none other than a tombstone and that undoubtedly to one of the Danvers family.

Four days later on the 24th of June Charles wrote a letter to the Bishop of Peterborough, in whose diocese Swithland was, explaining his family claims in the matter and describing everything in full to the best of his knowledge. He explained how he had heard that certain alterations were to be made in the chapel. He told the Bishop that the West wall was to come down on which several monuments to the Danvers family were erected and the floor of the Danvers Chapel was being lowered in accordance with the church floor. Charles pointed out that his object in writing to him was that he hoped he might use his powerful influence as the Bishop of the diocese with respect to the preserving of all those monuments, which Charles had fully described in his letter, and such tombstones and brasses that undoubtedly would be found underneath the floor of the Chapel.

Charles also mentioned the white tombstone he had found under the Lanesborough pew and reminded the Bishop that this Chapel had been the burying ground of the Danvers family for several hundred years.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

We now continue with Charles' narrative on this matter:

I went to Swithland church again on the 25th of July following where I saw Mr. Murray Dixon, the vicar, Mr. Herbert, the architect, and Mr. Stanley the builder in consultation respecting the work going on there. And he said that the Vicar, who had been called from his holidays, was sent to stop the work from proceeding in the chapel but the work was to go on as usual in other parts of the church. With this I felt assured that my letter to the Bishop had brought about an inquiry into the affairs and for which I was very pleased. However when there on August the 29th a little more than a month later I saw that some of the chapel floor, which would be about a third of the whole, had been lowered some two feet and on a level with the church floor and which as it then was exposed to view a great part of the brickwork of the vault in which Sir John Danvers Bart body lay.

At the time I first saw this Mr. Stanley the builder was just finishing the cementing of the part that had been taken out and saw on the floor four small impressions as if meant for four objects. It appeared that they were for four small tombstones, for some days afterwards on September the 3rd, I saw four placed on and cemented in where these marks had been. One was to Sir Francis Danvers as referred to in Nichols History and the one I was supposed to have seen lying under the Lanesborough pew. Another, which was Elizabeth Danvers, sister to the above Francis, daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Danvers, while the other two were to Joseph and Henry Danvers, sons of Sir John and Dame Mary Danvers.

They are in full as follows:- Here lyeth the body of Francis Danvers Son of Samuel Danvers Esq. Of Swithland who died December 1687. The body of Elizabeth Danvers lyeth under this stone, she was the daughter of Samuel Danvers and Elizabeth Danvers his wife she was born October 18th 1694, Died January 30th 1742. The body of Joseph Danvers lyeth under this stone. He was the son of Sir John Danvers and Dame Mary Danvers, his wife, Born July 8th 1756. He died October 1756. The body of Henry Danvers lyeth under this stone. He was the son of Sir John Danvers and Dame Mary Danvers, his wife, He was born the 17th of March 1757. He died March 21st 1789. The last three are inscribed on brass plates riveted onto the said stones. I asked Mr. Stanley where had he got his orders for the lowering of, the chapel floor, seeing that he had formerly told me that orders were given by the vicar that no work was to be done there.

I also asked the builder if any tombstones of any description had been found on this part of the floor when lowered. This he at first denied but after-

wards admitted to several having been found and that with the exception of the one to Francis son of Samuel, which I saw at the time, the others had been taken away to be cleaned. He also said that Lord Lanesborough had given him the order for this work to be done in the Chapel.

Charles was very dissatisfied with the way things were progressing in the Chapel and decided to ask Mr. Crosby, the landlord of the Swithland Arms, if he knew anything about the renovations. Charles was told that whilst the vicar was away work was being done any way but the right way. Charles was advised to see a Mr. A. Turner, the chairman of the Swithland Church Committee, who Mr. Crosby felt sure would be able to give Charles the information he wanted on the subject.

About the following day I went to see Mr. Turner at the Elastic Mills, Deacon Street, Leicester. He said that several tombstones had been found in the portion of the Chapel floor that had been lowered and that tracings had been taken of them and that they were to be placed in such position as they were found on the new floor level. Also owing to the vaults which would have to be opened no further groundwork could be done for it was feared that the vaults were very nearly full and that many coffins would have to be moved, he said, into other positions and in this he was speaking not on behalf of himself alone but the whole of the Church Committee. But however he said I should see Lord Lanesborough who I know is anxious to see you on this matter. On the strength of Mr. Turner's remark Charles decided to send the following letter to Lord Lanesborough.

The Nook, Anstey, September 2nd 1924

My Lord,

I had occasion to call and see Mr. A. Turner (of Swithland) at Deacon Street Leicester yesterday respecting the alterations in Swithland Church. During the conversation your lordship was alluded to in connection with it and Mr. Turner added that he thought you would be pleased, and at the same time, like to see me on the matter. On the suggestion of his I have decided to call at Swithland Hall on the off chance of your seeing me.

Yours faithfully, Charles Danvers.

Charles duly called at the Hall but was told on arrival that he was in Paris. Charles later learned that he was in fact shooting at Swithland with Colonel Robinson of Rothley. So he had been snubbed quite deliberately. Charles later wrote to the Bishop of Peterborough asking if permission had been given by him for the work to continue as he was under the impression that the Bishop had ordered it to be stopped. A reply came from the Bishop's

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Memorial to Francis Danvers showing his ancestors, wives & childrens' shields.

At this point in his notes Charles copied items from four different newspapers reporting the discovery of the lead coffins and the poor condition of Swithland Church whilst undergoing renovation. In particular the following extract taken from the Leicester Mercury on Saturday the 18th of April 1925

The church at present is a strange and pathetic spectacle. The whole of the chancel is roofless, and a huge tagged hole, the site of the new porch, is seen in the north wall. The graves in the churchyard are littered with masonry, slate, timber, and other detritus and the building is surrounded by scaffolding. Inside, however, the work that is being done may better be appreciated. Originally, there were two floor-levels, but now the whole of the floor has been dropped to the position it had in Saxon times.

Charles also copied another report from the Daily Chronicle issued on the 21st of April 1925 under the following heading "Finds at Saxon Church" 11th Century windows and Early Coffins uncovered during the restoration of Swithland Church, Leicestershire, which dates back to Saxon times, three of the original eleventh century windows were uncovered. Beneath the floor were found two coffins of children of the Danvers Butler family, ancestors of the present Earl of Lanesborough, whose county seat is Swithland Hall.

Continuing with Charles' narrative. *The two tiny lead coffins referred to were those of Henry and Joseph, son's of Sir John Danvers and Dame Mary Danvers his wife. These two little coffins with their tombstones were found buried not more than two feet below the Lanesborough pew. It was also here that the stone to the said Francis was found and although it is said that they were buried in the same place at a lower level, they were in fact removed into another position several feet away. And there is not the least doubt but that these little coffins were torn from the place where the fifth Earl of Lanesborough and his wife now lies, of which I shall have more to say respecting it later on. Charles continues further.*

When there (Swithland Church) on April 20th 1925, I saw that another portion of the Chapel floor had been lowered which as before would be about another third. Part of this had been lowered by some 12 inches forming a step whilst the other part was two feet the same as the first portion that was taken out. In doing this they had to take two feet from off the top of the Vault wherein the body of Sir John Danvers Bart. lay, and the Blue stone marking where he lay was buried again, like his little children's coffins, at a lower level. Also a part of the West wall of the Chapel had been pulled down and the 1631 memorial to Francis Danvers was removed and a semi archway constructed in its place. Seeing that this work in the Chapel was

office saying that the work had had not been cancelled but been authorised by the Faculty and was being carried out with the approval and under the supervision of the Earl of Lanesborough who they considered the chief representative of the Danvers family. We can imagine how Charles felt when he received that information!

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

being done spasmodically and with so much apparent secrecy, I decided to make inquiries at the Home Office.

Charles wrote to the Home Office on the 23rd of April 1925 asking if any permission had been granted by the Home Office for the opening of any grave or vault in the private Chapel. The reply received on the 27th of April was short and to the point; no trace of an application had been made or permissions being granted by the Home Office and the department would not be concerned unless human remains were disturbed. Charles must have been very upset at this somewhat terse reply and proceeded to write a long and detailed statement regarding what he had witnessed at Swithland. His letter covered three sides of A4 sheets of paper so it is perhaps better to just touch on one or two of the main points he made in it.

Charles began his letter by outlining his main concerns regarding the forged will, the destruction of the title deeds, the mutilation of the Church registers and the lack of any tombstones to any of the Danvers family until 1924 when he found, through his own efforts, the four tombstones of the Danvers children. He mentioned that the Chapel floor had been lowered by some two feet exposing the brickwork of a vault or vaults. He also pointed out that where the tombstones had been found there should be bodies buried directly underneath them. He finished his letter by writing the following three points:

1.) *That in 1866 when the tomb was made to receive the body of the fifth Earl of Lanesborough four coffins were most probably removed from its site and were deposited in the most convenient place at the time and the four tombstones found in the recent workings on this said Chapel floor indicated where these coffins were removed to. A new floor being laid over the whole of the Chapel burying the site leaving but one grave to be seen and that to the fifth Earl of Lanesborough.*

2.) *After I wrote to the Bishop of Peterborough on the matter the work of this Chapel was stayed but the present Earl of Lanesborough being perhaps aware of the existence of the said children's' coffins may have on his own authority authorized the lowering of that portion of the floor where they were and that but for the Press stepping in, nothing would have been known publicly respecting the finding of these said coffins of the children and others of the said Danvers family.*

3.) *The Chapel then being in a state of grave unsightliness someone or other has gone a step further and authorized the opening of the vault or vaults and the removing of a portion from such to meet the requirements of the case.*

Getting no reply to his letter Charles wrote again to the Home Office asking if they had received his statement and got the following reply:

Home Office Whitehall 25th May 1925 Sir, With reference to your statement dated the 11th last, regarding the Lanesborough Danvers Chapel, I am directed by the Secretary of State to say that on the information available he does not think it necessary to take any action in the matter. Your Obedient Servant E.J. Eagleston

This reply must have been very frustrating for Charles after all he had done to try to preserve what remained of the vault and its contents as well as any tombstones to the old Danvers family that may have been found when the floor was lowered. Charles continues his notes as follows:

To all appearances the Chapel matter, by this, appeared to have ended but why part of the floor should be left at the old level and part on the new appeared to me very mysterious especially so as to all appearance it was practically in a finished state. Everything being lavishly and if not elaborate or elegant at least tidy. But at the same time it looked what it was with its various and unusual floor planes and the little grave stones dotted here and there, a mystery of concealment than a place of refinement and candour as in the Danvers time wherein to offer up prayers to the almighty.

Someone in authority must have seen it in this light too, for on Wednesday September 16th 1925 the Leicester Mercury, with a picture illustrating the Chapel in such a vile state, published the following:

Earl Resents Church Dismantling, Family Chapel at Swithland wrecked and tombstones displaced. Services in Meeting House. Swithland Parish Church has been reduced almost to ruins and the congregation now worship in a disused Wesleyan Chapel.

Great indignation is felt by the parishioners at the remarkable state of affairs. The rector commenced an ambitious scheme of restoration in 1924 but when he resigned last July work ceased. The Church is completely dismantled, the roof is almost off and the tombs and monuments have been interfered with.

The Earl of Lanesborough is indignant over the "wild cat scheme" and says despite the warning by the Lord Chancellor that it was private property, his family Chapel has been practically pulled down and the tombstones on his ancestors graves removed from their setting. He says he would rather play golf than worship at the Old Nonconformist chapel. The Church is now to be patched up but the costly scheme of the former Vicar will not be carried out.

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An extraordinary impasse has now arisen in connection with Swithland Church and the people who reside in the district are wondering at the delay in the work of restoration, begun without legal authority last year. In July of 1924 the Rev Murray Dixon, who had the living for forty years decided that the Church needed restoring and work was accordingly begun. It being the intention to install a new heating system, alter the chancel, build a new porch, as well as erect North and South aisles. A faculty was applied for at the time and the builders and the architect, Mr. Herbert of Messer's Tait and Herbert, Leicester, proceeded with the task. The church was, to all intents and purposes, pulled down..

The article in the Mercury continued at great length in the same vein and, as is typical of many similar newspaper reports, possibly exaggerated the actual situation which caused a few feathers to be ruffled resulting in two strong letters to the Mercury in reply. The following two letters were taken from the following issues of the Leicester Mercury on the 18th and 23rd of September 1925.

To the Editor of the "Leicester Mercury" My attention has been called to an article in the Mercury of the 16th inst. Occupying a prominent position and headed "Earl Resents Church Dismantling." It is states therein -

- 1, that I, as architect employed, and the builders proceeded with the task in hand before a faculty was applied for. That is not correct, a faculty was obtained before any work was ordered by me, although it is admitted that certain repairs and minor works had been put in hand. The Bishop of Peterborough, the Advisory Committee, and the Chancellor have approved of my attitude in respect of any work performed.*

- 2. It is stated in the article that the roof is almost off, on the contrary, every portion of the roof is covered in, except that of a new porch, which is now being erected.*

- 3. The church has not "to all intents and purposes been pulled down."*

- 4. It is a fact that some monuments and walling have been removed from the Danvers Chapel though not under my instructions.*

Albert Herbert, Assoc: Royal Inst. Brit. Architects, Friar Lane, Leicester.

In reply the Mercury wrote the following:

Mr. Herbert's statement that "certain repairs and minor works had previously been put in hand" confirms what the Mercury said. It was of course never suggested that Mr. Herbert proceeded with any work without a faculty. The Mercury adheres to the statement that to all intents and purposes the Church was pulled down, Editor, Mercury. Not to be outdone the

Rector also aired his grievances, at great length, in response to the article.

The following letter on Swithland Church Restoration has been received by the Editor of the "Leicester Mercury" from the Rev. J. M. Murray-Dixon. ex-Rector of Swithland:

With reference to the report in your issue of the 16th inst., "Earl Resents Church Dismantling," one of the root causes of my resignation was my grave displeasure with the manner in which the work of restoration was being carried out, and with what I considered to be a waste of the funds at the disposal of the Restoration Committee, together with the fact that the Bishop of Peterborough felt it his duty to bring pressure upon me in connection with the services, etc., to be provided during the time the parish church was closed. With regard to the Bishop of the Diocese being "absolutely forced to licence the Wesleyan Chapel," I would like to say that from the time his lordship was approached he licenced the Church Schoolroom, and laid down what services were to be performed, which order was complied with until he deemed it advisable to cancel his former licence in favour of bestowing it upon the Wesleyan Meeting House.

As to the work of restoration being a "wild cat scheme," I beg to state that the plans were passed in a much elaborated form in Bishop Carr Glyn's time, and revised and simplified with the concurrence of Bishop Woods, and had there been no outside interference, all the work contemplated to be taken in hand could have been successfully carried out in a comparatively short time. So far as I am aware, no work except clearing away rubbish was entered upon without a faculty. And I can say positively that there was no disturbance of the (so-called) Danvers Chapel, other than that which was done by the Earl of Lanesborough himself, or on his written authority, which I have in my possession, and too, in compliance with the terms of the faculty granted.

I am prepared to challenge categorically practically every statement, made, and by way of example, to show the fallacy of saying "they practically pulled it (the church) down" as a matter of fact I have not seen a vestige of broken glass, and not a stone of the church has been removed save where four new windows are placed in the chancel, the roof of which, being past satisfactory repair, is being replaced by a new one, i.e., new timbering.

J. M. Murray Dixon, ex-Rector of Swithland.

Charles finally wrote a long statement summarising all his discoveries in Swithland Church and its Chapel; the tampering of the Swithland and Shepshed registers as well as the brass plates. It continues for approximately

ten A4 pages which is too much to record here so again we will be extracting those items from it which are of particular interest as follows:

It would appear, according to that part of Mr. Murray Dixon's letter, where he refers to the work in the Danvers Chapel as having been done by the Earl of Lanesborough himself or on his written authority and in compliance with the terms of the faculty granted, that Lord Lanesborough up to this present time had supervised the work done in this Chapel, but which had not been carried out according to exact details of the faculty asked for, nor did it appear as such to meet the views of the said Rector for it is said that the latter had the wall where the semi archway had been recently made, completely pulled down, and I believe defying Lord Lanesborough to do his worst.

By the pulling down of the whole of the West wall of the Chapel it meant that the whole of the Chapel floor had got to be lowered to the new level and this is where the trouble lay and where a long kept secret was to out. Whether Mr. Murray Dixon was cognisant of this fact; or whether it was for the beautifying of the Church I cannot say, but by this act he alone forced this matter.

At the time Sir Joseph Danvers rebuilt this Chapel in 1727 the vault ran down the centre of the Chapel from South to North and I believe from the doorway in the East to the centre and was six inches above the present new floor level. The vault being full he had the floor level raised some 18 inches and a reconstruction of the entire Chapel. After this Sir John, his son, had a new vault built in the South East corner for his five children who died in infancy as already stated and one for himself from the middle of the West wall (now pulled down) to meet the main vault in the centre. All the other space was taken up by pews allotted to various members on the Swithland estate. I should like to say too that for many years the old fashioned heating stove, used for warming up the Chapel, has stood on the grave of Sir John, but this is not to be wondered at when one comes to the actual facts that his sons, Joseph and Henry's coffins were found damaged but a few inches below the Lanesborough pew.

Further on in his statement, Charles then goes on to say:

By the above it will show that at the time Sir John Danvers was buried in this Chapel that there was no further room for subsequent burials but that Sir John Vanissart Danvers Butler, who had no Danvers blood in him, as successor to the Butler peerage after the said fifth Earl, and also with a view to claiming the Danvers property, had the tomb raided where the small



The Coat of Arms of Joseph Danvers on the Manor Farm, Swithland

children of Swithland and some others of the Danvers family lay and had them scattered hither and thither as so many tin cans, with scarcely enough soil to cover them, to install one to the house of Lanesborough and undoubtedly create a future impression as a Lanesborough seat and Chapel.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Charles then goes on to mention several facts that have been previously covered in this book regarding the forged will, the destruction of the deeds, the changing of the pedigree plate and the mistakes to be found on it including the following item not mentioned before:

The pedigree plate also gives Mary Danvers, who married Richard Butler, as the second daughter of Sir John Danvers, Bart., instead of the first, so as to cover up her illegitimacy. On the other pedigree plate which is known as the Francis Danvers Memorial erected in 1631, gives Henry Danvers as John Danvers.

Charles then discusses the missing Swithland Church registers stating that in the time of the Danvers family the registers would have been well looked after as they took a keen interest in the Church and its affairs. Charles then goes on to say: *Yet we have it that there are none for the years 1617 to 1623 inclusive nor from 1624 to 1633 or from 1638 until 1687 the year in which the said Henry died. And installments of certain years between 1687 and 1708 inclusive were found to have been put up and sold at a public auction. The miss between the years as stated up to 1687 would beyond all doubt, so far as the Swithland registers are concerned, cover up all traces of the said Henry Danvers and his family of seven children for William Danvers, the father of Henry married Elizabeth Babington of Rothley Temple, in the year 1618 at Rothley. There appears also no registerings between the years 1753 and 1783 and that during the time when the family of Sir John Danvers was born and which would undoubtedly, if left as it had been kept, have proved that his daughter Mary was his eldest child and at the same time illegitimate!*

Charles then goes on to state that the registers now at Swithland Church are not the original nor even a manuscript from the original but a compilation by one person. He further states that as there are no entries for any of the Danvers family with the exception of Elizabeth, wife of William, who died in 1678 this proves beyond doubt that this was a deliberate attempt on the part of the Lanesborough family to stop any linking of the Swithland Danvers with that of the Danvers family of Shepshed. Charles then continues with the following detail:

My suspicions were further aroused on June 22nd 1926 when Mr. Charles Wood (the verger) told me that a certain genealogist, who I knew to be in connection with the affair with the present Earl of Lanesborough, both of whom are members of the Leicester Archaeological Society and who when I approached him previously for certain information tried to dissuade me, in

the face of all the facts I had to hand, that the said William Danvers of Shepshed was the son of Henry Danvers of Swithland, had about a month previously been going through the registers. On this occasion of which I am speaking the verger whilst I looked on found a further additional entry, which neither of us had noticed although we had been through the register many times together before in search of the name of Danvers, to one Katherine wife of John Danvers who was buried in August the 9th 1693. Undoubtedly the cause of this further and most recent tampering is for the object of disconnecting the said Henry and William as father and son and connecting up the latter with that of the assumed John of the entry.

Charles continues by stating that the Earl of Lanesborough himself was responsible, directly or indirectly, for the breaking up, at night, of the tombstones of the senior members of the Danvers family. Finally, Charles next begins to summarise all his facts in the following two statements:

It is now clear to see that the false entries on the pedigree plates with respect to John born in 1452, and Henry as married to Ann daughter of Sir Joseph Cook of Melbourne 1664, the destruction of the title deeds, the outrage on the Swithland and Shepshed registers, the outrage on the tombs of the little children of Sir John Danvers to find room for one of the house of Lanesborough and lastly as the present Lord Lanesborough admits himself to the breaking up of the tombstones which had already been concealed for some considerable time was to mislead and keep from any member of the Danvers family in the future from at least ever attempting, let alone making, any possible successful claim on Swithland as their rightful and lawful inheritance as brought about by the said marriage of John Danvers of Shackerstone and Margaret Walcote heiress of Swithland early in the fifteenth century.

Charles continues in the same vein: *According to the facts of this my statement it will be seen that since the death of Sir John Danvers Bart., in 1796 there has been one continuance of apparent fraud, concealment and distraction going on for the purpose of disconnecting any chance claim from arising by positive proof to it and which would be the means of removing the Lanesborough family from the Manor of Swithland also fundamentally get into possession and the return of the true descendants of the Danvers family of which those of Shepshed descent are the true and lawful ones.*

We now have to bring the whole matter of the Lanesborough fraud to an end and allow Charles one final comment which must bring the incredible story of the Swithland and Shepshed Danvers family saga to a close.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The Coat of Arms of Sir Joseph Danvers hanging on the wall of the Danvers Chapel in Swithland Church showing the red hand of Baronetcy in an escutcheon in the top left quarter which is similar to that found on the coat of arms on the portrait of a gentleman on page 39 leading us to believe it is Sir Joseph Danvers.

Charles goes on to say that he had no other papers connected with this affair after 1866 only the following letter.

83 Bird and Bush Road Peckham S.E. London, October 28 1873

Dear Sir,

I wrote on the 22nd of this month asking you to forward me by the following

Friday 25th instant, a copy of the deed made in 1753 in reference to the property by which deed your family since that date claimed the estates as Mail in Tail and Heir at Law. I also asked about a judgement dated 1866 but I have received no answer. I therefore fear you cannot have received my letter. Please attend to this immediately. Terms commences next month and send by return in answer to questions. Some short time ago you referred to some trial that took place in 1844 what does this refer to. I shall most likely run down to you on Saturday but I wish to show Council a copy of the Deed you referred to. On no account delay in your reply - send immediately. If you have not a copy of the Deed let me know who holds it.

Yours faithfully E. E. Timothy

Charles continues:

Respecting the correspondence with E.E. Timothy above, my grandfather, being something like 85 years old at the time and getting somewhat feeble in health, naturally allowed the matter to drift. His eldest son died a few years later, and as father had seen so many ups and downs with it, and not exactly the next of kin allowed it to drift too. However, some 15 years later, Grandfather then being dead, Timothy wrote again with a promise of the money being found to prosecute but this didn't cause any move in the matter, so nothing has been done in the way of prosecuting it since to my knowledge. I should like to say that I have left no stone unturned in searching and adding such authentic gleanings as would help to strengthen and at the same time be the means of seeing this property back in the hands of the rightful owner. In conclusion I can safely vouch for all I have written in the above statement and would not hesitate in any way from confirming this in the front of any judge, jury, or other tribunal were it necessary at any time to do so, for the purpose of showing up the vile and dastardly work done in this matter of more than vast fraud.

Faithfully, Charles Wm. Danvers 28 Western Road Derby

We would like to finish this chapter with a quote from a document by an, as yet, unknown writer which was sent to the author by Gary Danvers in New Zealand. *Subsequently the Lanesborough family continued from that time to live at Swithland Hall in comparative luxury and splendour - blissfully unaware that maybe in the future some member of the Danvers will emerge from the shadows with enough money and above sufficient time and patience to establish - or re-establish the family as the rightful owners of Swithland Hall and Estate.*

POSTSCRIPT TO CHAPTER SEVEN

Further information regarding Charles William Danvers came to light after the author was in touch with Dr. Stephen W. Hales, a paediatrician who lives and works in New Orleans. He is the great, great grandson of John Danvers, born 4th February 1790, see family tree opposite, who tried to regain the Swithland estates from the Earl of Lanesborough as we have noted on page 69. His great grandfather, John Danvers, born 1835, was baptised into the Mormon faith and in common with many other converts in Shepshed at the time decided to emigrate to Utah with his family.

John Danvers' granddaughter, Linda Danvers, wrote the following in a letter to the family about his conversion:

At the time he (John Danvers) was preparing to go into court and lay claim to the Swithland estates when the Mormon missionaries converted him to the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. He threw all of his energies into that Church and having a great desire to come to Zion in Utah, he lost all interest in the family estates and came to the United States to live.

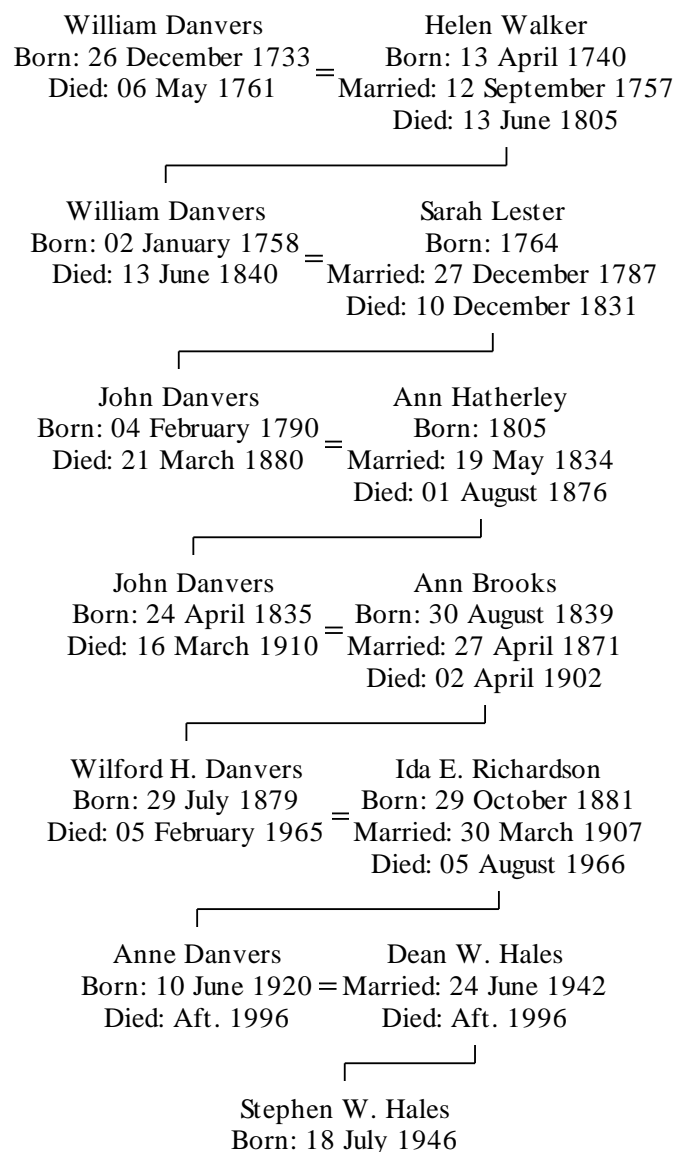
When he left Shepshed in 1884 (see page 74) he took with him papers relating to the evidence which his family had collected to help them in their efforts to regain the Swithland estates. These papers have been referred to in this book as they had been copied by June Danvers, who presented a bound, typewritten copy of these notes to the Record Office in Wigston Magna.

However when Dr. Stephen Hales decided to visit Swithland in 2010 he brought with him a copy of all these papers on a CD which he presented to the author. Amongst the many documents on the CD the author discovered a letter that had been written by Charles Danvers to Wilford H Danvers, the son of John Danvers. Wilford had fought in WWI and had risen to the rank of Major. After the cease fire in 1918, whilst he was still in Europe after the war, Wilford decided to visit his relatives in England.

Wilford visited Shepshed, Swithland and Nottingham and sought out his Danvers relatives. Wilford was quickly recognised in the village of Shepshed as John Danvers' son. However when he visited Swithland Hall he found that he was not made very welcome. He tried to assure the Butlers (by then the Danvers name was not much used, apparently) that he had no interest in revisiting the claim to the title and property initiated by his father, but he was always clear that they were most suspicious of him.

Wilford sent the following letter to his brother telling of his visit to Shepshed:-

Direct Descendants of William Danvers



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

“I visited in Nottingham, Loughborough, Shepshed, Derby, Trent, Leeds, and Sheffield, and then went to London and spent a week there.

I wandered along the Ring Fence at Shepshed. saw Tommy Cotton’s Old Mill and made a thorough inspection of some of the New Mills in that neighborhood. Chatted with Old Tom Bailey who remembered Father quite well. Lunched with one of our many Cousins and met more Danvers’ people than you could shake a stick at. Sat in the parlor at 49 Sabrina Street, Nottingham, and visited the Arboretum and swans and the Old Castle, Charnwood and Mt. Sorrel.

If you don’t mind you might send this letter to Sarah. She will doubtless be pleased to know that her kid brother draped his major’s uniform over the Ring Fence and gave the natives of that sleepy and ancient village a thrill.”

When Charles William Danvers, who by this time was living in Derby, heard that Wilford Danvers had visited Shepshed, he urgently sought those papers that Wilford’s father, John Danvers, had taken with him to America, as there was still an intention by his cousin living in Nottingham to pursue the claims to the Swithland estates. The only person this could refer to, if we consider the letter below, would be Frederick Danvers the son of Henry Danvers the eldest son of John Danvers and Elizabeth Stokes, see family tree on page 70. Charles contacted the U.S.A. War Department and asked them if they would allow him to have Wilford’s address in the U.S.A.

In the hope that he had managed to find the correct person, he then wrote to Major Wilford Danvers. However for reasons best known to himself Major Wilford Danvers did not respond to his letter.

Below are excerpts from the letter that Charles wrote, dated 1925:-

Dear Sir,

...I understand that in about 1918 you visited Shepshed in the hope of tracing your father’s relatives. From those of the Danvers of Shepshed with whom you came into contact during your visit I learned that you made reference to the Swithland properties in which I myself am interested..... I have left no stone unturned in the way of strengthening the Danvers claim to the lost properties and for the past eighteen months or more alterations having been in progress in the Danvers Chapel I have found out many important clues that strengthened that claim.

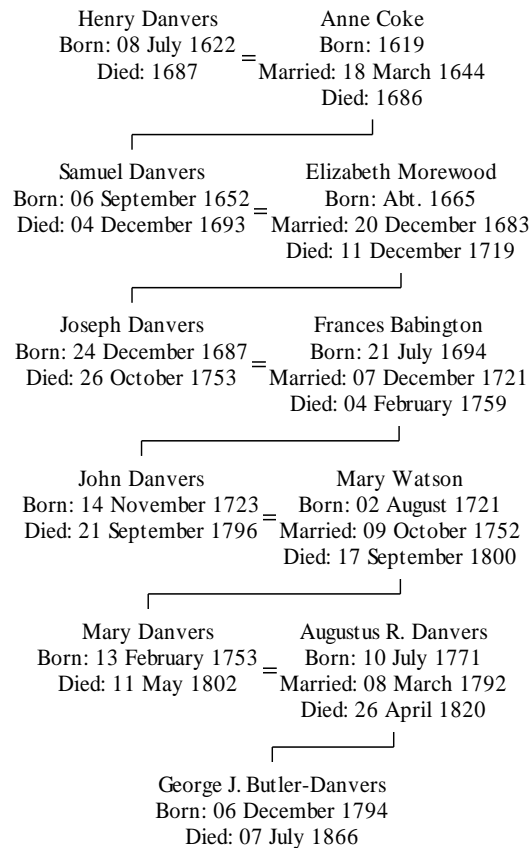
The said John Danvers (my uncle) who migrated to Salt Lake City took with him important papers, amongst which was the pedigree and likely births, deaths and marriage certificates to which the family attach great importance as these papers established their connection with and their claim



Major Wilford H. Danvers in his uniform circa 1918

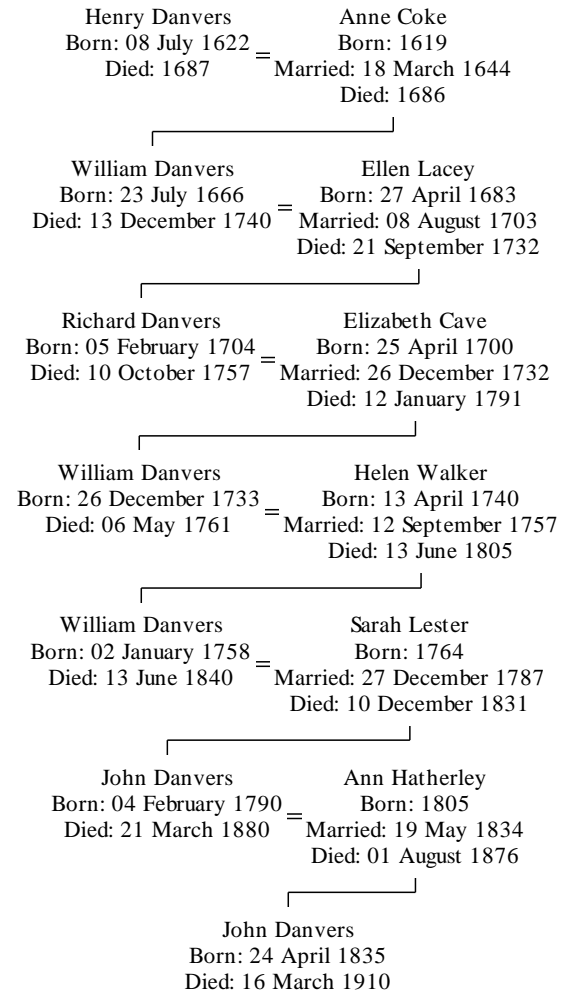
Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Direct Descendants of Henry Danvers



Family tree showing the ancestors of George Butler Danvers relative to the tree on the right which shows the different claimants to the Swithland estates. George Butler Danvers died childless so the estates should in theory have reverted to the Danvers family as they were entailed, but instead they were inherited by his nephew John Vansittart Danvers Butler. The 6th Earl of Lanesborough.

Direct Descendants of Henry Danvers



This Family tree shows those members of the Danvers family who were to spend time and money in their efforts to regain the Swithland estates. William Danvers, born 1758, the first to challenge the Butler family, followed by his son John Danvers and grandson also John Danvers who finally took most of the papers relating to the alleged fraud with him to America.



John Danvers born 24th of April 1835 in Shepshed. He took all the papers related to the fraud to America after being converted to the Mormon faith.

APPENDIX

This appendix consists of various different types of material which the author felt would be better left until the end of this book. It starts with the census returns from Shepshed beginning with the 1841 census, hoping this will assist those readers wishing to research their own connections to the Danvers family which they may not have found in the book itself.

As may be seen from these census returns, a very large proportion of the Danvers family, in common with many other families in Shepshed, at the time, were framework knitters. According to the census of 1841 just over 50 percent of all those employed in Shepshed were framework knitters. So the author felt that some readers might find a brief history of framework knitting useful and interesting for those unaware of the fascinating background to this cottage industry. The appendix is also an ideal place to put any additional research material which may have been discovered after this book was put together, which the author feels is of sufficient interest to warrant being added to the book.

The author would like also to add a word of caution to all his readers when checking the facts and dates contained within this book. The only truly accurate and foolproof way to check any fact is to go to the primary source material, such as birth, marriage and death certificates etc. It is so easy for errors to creep in whilst compiling lists of dates etc. Census returns in particular are not as accurate as we might wish. All secondary source material must be considered questionable until proved otherwise. Another important point regarding this book is that it has been put together in something of a rush due to several factors and that in itself may undoubtedly lead to errors no matter how much care is put into checking and rechecking all the facts we had at our disposal.

Finally and perhaps most importantly is where did the Danvers family come from prior to being in Frolesworth in 1185. The answer to that is not easy to establish in spite of what we read on the family tree on page 2 that Hugh Danvers descended from Norman Alverse, a Brabanter who married a daughter of Torold, son of Jeffrey the Saxon.

The author hopes that what has been written in this book will stimulate someone else with the time and energy to pursue the Danvers family history much further and in much greater detail. Thereby producing a fresh and perhaps more accurate version of what is undoubtedly a fascinating project.

Tony Danvers 2010



The Author seated at a stocking frame at the Framework Knitters Museum.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

1841 Census Shepshed

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
1 Pick Street	John Danvers	50	Hus	FWK Angola *
	Ann (Hatherley) Danvers	40	Wife	FWK “
	Henry Danvers	15	Son	FWK Gloves
	Mary Ann Tivey	15	Dau	FWK
	Charles Tivey	14	Son	FWK
	Jane Tivey	10	Dau	
	John Danvers	6	Son	
	Charles Danvers	2	Son	
28 Pick Street	William Danvers	40	Hus	Stocking Maker
	Sarah (Lester) Danvers	39	Wife	Hosiery Stitcher
	John Danvers	18	Son	
	Anne Danvers	14	Dau	FWK
	Elmina Danvers	11	Dau	
	Mary Danvers	9	Dau	
	Diana Danvers	5	Dau	Blind from birth
	Elizabeth Danvers	6mth	Dau	
Forest Street	Elizabeth Danvers	10	Dau	
Moorfield	Elizabeth Danvers	15	Dau	of Richard Danvers and
	Ann Danvers	13	Dau	Ann Tabb deceased
	Richard Danvers	35	Hus	FWK Worsted
10 Forest Street	Mary (Ragg) Danvers	35	Wife	
	Edgar Danvers	15	Son	FWK
	Ann Danvers	13	Dau	FWK
	Hannah Danvers	25	Dau of	William & Elizabeth
5 Forest Street	Hannah Danvers	25	Dau of	William & Elizabeth
5 Hallcroft	John Danvers	40		FWK

* N.B. FWK is the shortened form for framework knitter



A delightful cottage on Forest Street, Shepshed

1851 Census Shepshed

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
Brook Street <i>Folio 413</i>	John Danvers	61	Hus	FWK Angola
	Ann (Hatherley) Danvers	46	Wife	FWK “
	John Danvers	16	Son	FWK “
	Charles Danvers	11	Son	Scholar
	Samuel Danvers	8	Son	“
28 Pick Street <i>Folio 391</i>	Thomas Danvers	6	Son	“
	Sarah (Lester) Danvers	50	Wife	Pauper
	John Danvers	28	Son	Basket Maker
	Ann Danvers	24	Dau	FWK
	Diana Danvers	17	Dau	Blind from birth
	Elizabeth Danvers	11	Dau	Scholar

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

1851 Census Shepshed cont:

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
Lant Street <i>Folio 481</i>	Richard Danvers	46	Hus	FWK
	Mary (Ragg) Danvers	45	Wife	
	Edgar Danvers	25	Son	FWK
	Ann Danvers	23	Dau	FWK
	Edward Danvers	8	Son	Scholar
Field Street <i>Folio 458</i>	William Danvers	53	Hus	FWK Angola
	Elizabeth (Wardle) Danvers	48	Wife	
	Amos Danvers	15	Son	FWK Angola
	Sarah Danvers	11	Dau	Seamer “
	Elizabeth Danvers	8	Dau	Seamer “
Danvers Lane <i>Folio 440</i>	Henry Danvers	27	Lodger	FWK Gloves
	Sarah Danvers	14	Visitor	Scholar
Mill Yard - <i>Folio 500</i>	William Danvers	62	F-in-Law	FWK Worsted
	Hannah (Danvers) Bennett	35	Dau	FWK Cotton



1861 Census Shepshed

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
23 Brook Street	John Danvers	71	Hus	FWK Merino
	Ann (Hatherley) Danvers	55	Wife	
	Charles Danvers	21	Son	FWK “
	Samuel Danvers	17	Son	FWK “
	Thomas Danvers	14	Son	FWK “
28 Pick Street	Sarah (Lester) Danvers	58	Wid	Seamstress
	John Danvers	38	Son	Coal Higgler
	Ann Danvers	35	Dau	FWK Worsted
	Diana Danvers	27	Dau	Blind from birth
	Elizabeth Danvers	14	Dau	FWK Worsted
	Elmina Danvers	8	GD	Scholar
	William Danvers	6	GS	“

33 Sullington Road	Elijah Danvers	30	Wid	FWK Merino
12 Lant Street	Richard Danvers	56	Hus	FWK Worsted
	Mary (Ragg) Danvers	56	Wife	Seamstress
	Edward Danvers	19	Son	FWK
	Mary Danvers	9	GD	Scholar
71 Market Place	William Danvers	64	Hus	FWK Cotton Hose
	Elizabeth (Wardle) Danvers	60	Wife	Seamstress “
	Sarah Danvers	23	Dau	Seamstress “
	William Danvers	1	GS	
22 Well Yard	Edgar Danvers	35	Hus	FWK Cotton
	Mary (Unwin) Danvers	33	Wife	Seamstress
17 Chapel Street	John Danvers	25	Hus	FWK Cotton
	Mary (Corbett) Danvers	24	Wife	Seamstress

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The corner of Sullington Road showing a possible framework knitters Cottage

1871 Census Shepshed

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
Brook Street	Samuel Danvers	28	Hus	FWK Cotton
	Mary (Gale) Danvers	19	Wife	FWK “
	Samuel Danvers	1mth	Son	
Well Yard	Edgar Danvers	44	Hus	FWK Worsted
	Mary Danvers	43	Wife	Seamstress

1871 Census Shepshed, cont:

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
Pick Street	Sarah (Lester) Danvers	69	Wid	Hosiery Stitcher
	John Danvers	47	Son	Coal Higgler
	Ann Danvers	45	Dau	FWK
	Diana Danvers	38	Dau	Blind from birth
	Elizabeth Danvers	24	Dau	FWK
	William Danvers	16	GS	Coal Higgler
Well Yard	Ann Moore	6	GD	Scholar
	Edward Danvers	29	Hus	FWK Merino
	Ann (Martin) Danvers	28	Wife	Seamstress
	Martha Danvers	7	Dau	Scholar
	Richard Danvers	5	Son	“
	William Danvers	3	Son	“
	John Danvers	1	Son	
Navigation Road	Thomas Danvers	26	Hus	Butcher
	Mary Ann (Hillier) Danvers	20	Wife	Seamer
	Sarah Danvers	2	Dau	
	Mary Danvers	7 mth	Dau	
Danvers Lane	Charles Danvers	31	Hus	FWK Merino
	Mary (Greasley) Danvers	27	Wife	Seamer
	Elizabeth Danvers	1	Dau	
	Charles William Danvers	3 mth	Son	
Lant Street	John Danvers	81	Father	FWK Worsted
	Ann Danvers	65	Head	Seamer
Queen Street	Richard Danvers	66	Lodger	FWK Cotton
Pick Street	Elizabeth Danvers	70	Lodger	
	William Danvers	11	Gson	

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

1881 Census Shepshed

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
42 Navigation Road				
	Samuel Danvers	38	Hus	FWK Cotton
	Samuel Danvers	10	Son	Scholar
87 Navigation Road				
	Edward Danvers	39	Hus	FWK Merino
	Ann (Martin)	38	Wife	"
	Martha Danvers	17	Dau	"
	Richard Danvers	15	Son	"
	William Danvers	13	Son	Scholar
	John Danvers	11	Son	"
	Sarah Ann Danvers	9	Dau	"
	Thomas Danvers	4	Son	"
	Elizabeth Danvers	2	Dau	"
	Henry Danvers	11mth	Son	"
92 Navigation Road				
	Thomas Danvers	35	Hus	FWK Cotton
	Mary Ann (Hillier) Danvers	30	Wife	Seamstress
	Sarah Danvers	12	Dau	Scholar
	Mary Danvers	10	Dau	"
	Thomas Danvers	8	Son	"
	Ernest Danvers	2	Son	"
	Riley Danvers	4mth	Son	"
10 Cotton Mill				
	John Danvers	45	Hus	FWK Cotton
	Anne (Brooks) Danvers	43	Wife	Seamstress
	John Danvers	19	Son	FWK Cotton
	William Danvers	9	Son	Scholar
	Ernest H Danvers	5	Son	"
46 Pick Street				
	John Danvers	59	Hus	Coal Higgler
	Elizabeth Danvers	55	Wife	Seamstress
	John Spencer Danvers	13	Son	Coal Higgler
2 Lant Street				
	Mary (Unwin) Danvers	54	Wid	Seamer



Framework knitters houses in Belton Street built in 1869

1881 Census Shepshed, cont:

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
16 Leicester Road				
	Charles Danvers	41	Hus	FWK Merino
	Mary (Harris Greasley) Danvers	38	Wife	Housewife
	Elizabeth Danvers	11	Dau	Scholar
	Charles William Danvers	10	Son	"
	William Danvers	7	Son	"
	Arthur Danvers	5	Son	"
	Harris Danvers	4	Son	"
	John H Danvers	2	Son	"
	Ernest Danvers	4mth	Son	"
43 Pick Street				
	Ann Danvers	54	Wid	Boarder
	William Danvers	26	Son	Mine Labourer
6 Belton Street				
	Diana Danvers	47	UnMar	Blind Annuitant

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

1891 Census Shepshed

Address	Name	Age	Status	Occupation	
Ring Fence	Edward Danvers	49	Hus	FWK Merino	
	Ann (Martin)	48	Wife	"	
	John Danvers	21	Son	Machine mender	
	Sarah Ann Danvers	19	Dau	Hosiery Hand	
	Elizabeth Danvers	12	Dau	Scholar	
	Henry Danvers	10	Son	"	
	Charles Danvers	9	Son	"	
Church Street	Thomas Danvers	44	Hus	Coal Dealer	
	Mary Ann (Hillier)	40	Wife	Seamstress	
	Thomas Danvers	18	Son	Coal Dealer	
	Ernest Danvers	13	Son	Scholar	
	Riley Danvers	11	Son	"	
	Martha Danvers	9	Dau	"	
	Edith Danvers	7	Dau	"	
	Harry Danvers	5	Son	"	
	Leonard Danvers	2	Son		
	16 Leicester Road	Charles Danvers	50	Hus	FWK Hosiery
		Mary (Harris Greasley)	46	Wife	Housewife
Elizabeth Danvers		21	Dau	Stocking Hand	
Charles William Danvers		20	Son	Artist	
William Danvers		17	Son	FWK Stockings	
Arthur Danvers		15	Son	Shoemaker	
Harris Danvers		14	Son	Scholar	
John H Danvers		12	Son	"	
Ernest Danvers		11	Son	"	
Emma Danvers		8	Dau	"	
Pick Street	Ann Danvers	65	Mother	Rtd Hosiery Hand	
Belton Street	Diana Danvers	56	UnMar	Blind from birth	
Hathern Road	William Danvers	30	Hus		
	Emma Danvers	29	Wife		

12 Brook Street	Mary Danvers	65	Wid	
105 Brook Street	Mary Danvers	19	Niece	
Pick Street	John Spencer Danvers	23	Hus	Stone Quarry Labourer
	Julia Danvers	23	Wife	
	Elizabeth Danvers	66	Mother	Own Means
	William Nelson	6	Cousin	
Charnwood Road	Samuel Danvers	49	Hus	
	Caroline Danvers	53	Wife	
Ring Fence	Sarah Ann Bird	45	Mother	Housewife
	William Danvers	23	S-Law	FWK Factory
	Sarah Ann (Stevens)	23	Dau	Factory Hand



Church Street, where Thomas and Mary Danvers lived in 1891

A Brief History of Framework Knitting

The Danvers ancestral story would not be complete without some understanding of the history of framework knitting that was the main source of employment for many of our Shepshed ancestors from the late seventeenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century when it fell into decline as a cottage industry being replaced by steam powered factories in Leicester, Hinckley and Loughborough

There are many conflicting stories surrounding the life of the inventor of the first framework knitting machine. What prompted its invention and the background of its inventor are shrouded in doubt and mystery. One such story, published by Gravenor Henson in 1831, is well worth relating.

Gravenor says that his account of Lee and his invention was derived from old people that he had talked to no doubt adding some embellishments of his own.

“The invention of the knitting machine (since better known by the name of the stocking frame, and the workmen as framework-knitters) owed its origin, as is universally agreed, to a singular circumstance, the disappointed love of the inventor, the Rev. William Lee, curate of Calverton, in the county of Nottingham.

This gentleman, it is said, paid his addresses to a young woman in his neighbourhood, to whom, from some cause, his attentions were not agreeable; or, as with more probability it has been conjectured, she affected to treat him with negligence, to ascertain her power over his affections. Whenever he paid his visits, she always took care to be busily employed in knitting, and would pay no attention to his addresses; this conduct she pursued to such a harsh extent, and he vowed to devote his future leisure, instead of dancing attendance on a capricious woman, who treated his attention with cold neglect, in devising an invention that should effectually supersede her favourite employment of knitting.”

A rather different account of Lee and his invention had been noted by John Aubrey who, sometime after 1656, wrote the following about William Lee:

‘Mr. William Lee, MA, was of Oxford (I think Magdalene Hall). He was the first inventor of the weaving of stockings by an engine of his contrivance. He was a Sussex man born, or else lived there. He was a poor curate, and, observing how much pains his wife took in knitting a pair of stockings, he bought a stocking and a half, and observed the contrivance of the stitch,



William Lee the inventor of the Framework Knitting Machine

which he designed in his loom, which (though some of the appendant instruments of the engine be altered) keeps the same to this day. He went to France, and died there before his loom was made there. So the art was, not long since, in no part of the world but England. Oliver Protector made an Act that it should be a felony to transport this engine.’

However much such stories may differ it seems fairly certain from contemporary accounts that William Lee invented a knitting machine in 1589. After perfecting his machine, it appears that William Lee moved to London to set himself up in business, due to local animosity.

There was strong opposition to Lee’s machine from the hand-knitters at first, and Queen Elizabeth herself understood and sympathised with their anxieties. When Lee’s patron, Lord Hunsdon, asked her to grant the inventor a patent, she refused. ‘My Lord,’ she said, ‘I have too much love for my poor people who obtain their bread by the employment of knitting, to give my money to forward an invention that will tend to their ruin by depriving them of employment, and thus make them beggars.’

Despairing of success in his own country William Lee went to France

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

and with the patronage of the French king set up in business in Rouen. What happened next is again wide open to conjecture but it seems that William Lee died in Rouen and the widespread use of the framework knitting machine in London was due to the efforts of his brother James Lee. By the end of the seventeenth century what has been described as the most complicated piece of machinery employed in the pre-industrial world was increasingly and extensively used in England and also in various European countries.

Hosiery making with the use of Lee's stocking frame took root in the



The Interior of a Framework Knitter's Cottage

East Midlands partly because of the Lee family's association with Nottingham but also because of the growing use of wool, and later cotton, in a market that had originally been confined to silk. As the product became cheaper so the market extended. The demand for labour in the growing hosiery trade stimulated the move from London where the rules of the Company of Framework Knitters limited the number of apprentices that could be employed.

Leicestershire's first stocking frame was set up at Hinckley in 1640 by William Iliffe, and within twenty years fifty frames were at work in Leicestershire, compared with Nottinghamshire's hundred. Leicester itself did not have its first frame until about 1680, but early in the following century, the number of frames in Leicester had overtaken the number in Nottingham, providing the earliest large-scale answer to the problem of 'setting the poor to work', and beginning that slow but steady flow of people into the towns from the outlying villages and hamlets.

By the end of the 17th century the detailed lists of possessions in many Leicestershire wills show that framework knitting was relatively widespread in the countryside.

One of the earliest will's that mentions a stocking frame is the inventory of George Hogsonn of Dishley Mill, dated 4th February 1660. One hundred years later framework knitting was even more widely spread throughout the Leicestershire countryside; in the latter part of the 18th century it is evident in 118 of the county's villages and hamlets. Wills of the 18th century show that it was usually combined with farming.

The will of William Lester, a Shepshed stockinger, who died on 19th November 1755, left several parcels of arable land, meadows and pastures in three of the Town Fields as well as other parcels of land at Frogghole and Dorkin meadow situated in Shepshed. He also left his daughter Mary the not inconsiderable sum for that day and age of £42

Initially there was a huge demand for stockings to adorn the legs of men, as well as women, due to changing fashions and the knitters enjoyed independence and plenty of leisure time. Although their wages were always low the framework-knitters appear to have been, on the whole, a generally contented body of workers, labouring in their own homes and enjoying their self-determined hours of leisure. There was little education among them, and most were illiterate. But the Leicester hosier and amateur musician William Gardiner recalled that:-

'the lower orders were comparatively in a state of ease and plenty.'

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What contributed to their solid comforts was the common and open field, upon which they kept their pig and poultry, and sometimes a cow. The stockinger had peas and beans in his snug garden, and a good barrel of humming ale. To these comforts were added two suits of clothes, a working suit and a Sunday suit; but, more than all, he had leisure, which in the summertime was a blessing and delight. The year was chequered with holidays, wakes, and fairs; it was not one dull round of labour. Those who had their frames at home seldom worked more than three days in a week.'

Leicestershire's framework knitters enjoyed a long period of prosperity from the 1780s until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The years of the French Wars made great demands on the industry. Labour was scarce and workers were attracted to the hosiery villages and Leicester from beyond the county's boundaries in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. 'As poor as a stockinger' was an 18th century saying, but times got even worse in the next century. Deep economic depression followed the victory of Waterloo in 1815 and the ending of the war. Returning soldiers also added to the surfeit of labour. The report of a parliamentary commission on the framework knitters, published in 1845 showed that between 1815 and 1819 the wages for a full week's work of 15 hours per day had fallen from 14s. to 7s. But this was only the beginning of the decline of the rural cottage hosiery industry that continued for the greater part of the 19th century.

Capitalism and exploitation were the early masters in the stocking trade, however, and the climb to the general prosperity of the twentieth century was over the starving bodies of the framework knitters. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it had become a rarity for a stockinger to own his own frame, which at that time cost between £50 and £60. The stocking frames were owned by the manufacturers and hired out to 'masters' or middle-men, who employed the labourers. These workers - often illiterate - operated the machines in their homes, earning their wages at piecework rates for the number of stockings they produced. But they were completely at the mercy of the masters.

There was no agreed minimum rate, and the knitters had to pay weekly frame-rent, the cost of lights during the winter, a wage to a woman 'seamer', oil for the machine; and all this out of the mere pittance they earned in the first place, by sitting at their frames for perhaps thirteen hours a day. They might be lucky, in hard times, to have four and sixpence a week left after stoppages.

The growing iniquities of the masters put intolerable pressures on the

knitters. The practices of "truck" and "stinting" became widespread, and then price-cutting appeared, and the situation of the labourers gradually got worse. "Truck" was the system whereby the middlemen, who frequently had other business interests, often in the form of retail trade, used their profits to acquire stocking frames and become owners themselves.

They paid the knitters their wages with goods instead of money, and as the knitters relied on the middlemen for their work, they were in no position to refuse. "Stinting" meant that, when work was short, the middlemen spread it out over a large number of frames, instead of just enough to produce the work at full capacity. But the knitters still had to pay their full week's frame rent. Thus they were contributing to the masters' profits from both retail trade and frame-rents. If the machines broke down, they were expected to be their own mechanics, so that every hour spent on repairs was an hour's less production towards their scanty wages. Growing desperation led them to adopt the only apparent solution to their problems - they rented extra frames and trained their children to operate them.

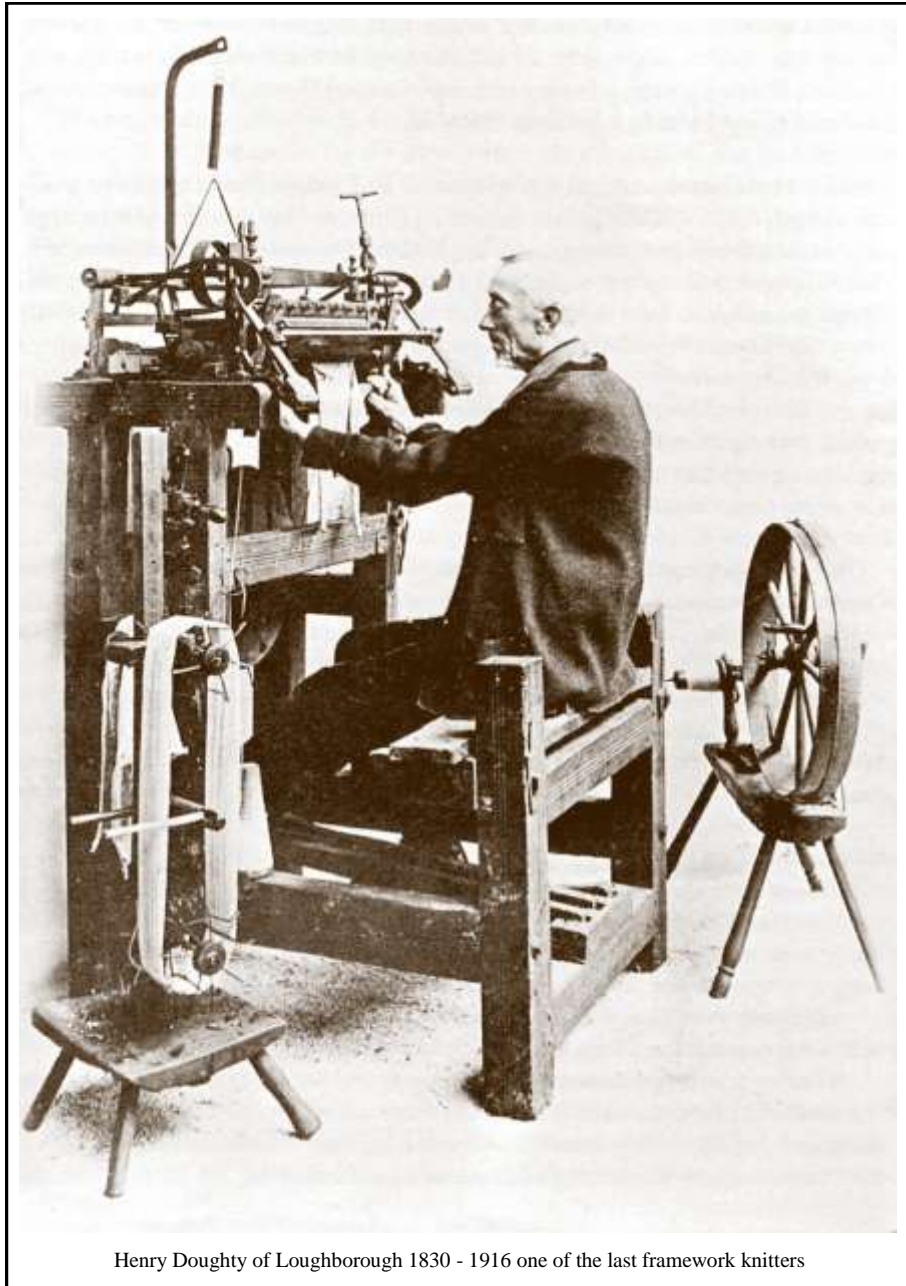
Several native Midlanders testified to the appalling conditions of the knitters during the 1830s and early 1840s, before hosiery manufacturing was transformed into a modern factory industry. General Booth, the Salvation Army founder, born in Nottingham in 1829, wrote:

'When but a mere child, the degradation and helpless misery of the poor stockingers of my native town, wandering gaunt and hunger-stricken through the streets, droning out their melancholy ditties, crowding the Union or toiling like galley slaves on relief works for a bare subsistence, kindled in my heart yearnings to help the poor which have continued to this day and which have had a powerful influence on my whole life.'

Thomas Cooper, the Chartist born in Leicester in 1805, recalled being sent as a journalist to report on a meeting in his native town in 1840, and was surprised, when he emerged at eleven o'clock at night, to see lights in the upper windows of working men's houses, and hear the creaking of stocking-frames:

'Do your stocking weavers often work so late as this?' I asked some of the men who were leaving the meeting. 'No not often: work's over scarce for that,' they answered; but we're glad to work any hour, when we can get work to do.' *'Then your hosiery trade is not good in Leicester?' I observed. 'Good!' It's been good for nought this many a year,' said one of the men. 'We've a bit of a spurt now and then but we soon go back again to starvation!' 'And what may be the average earning of a stocking weaver?'*

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Henry Doughty of Loughborough 1830 - 1916 one of the last framework knitters

I asked, 'I mean when a man is fully employed.' 'About four and sixpence,' was the reply. 'Four and sixpence,' I said; 'well six fours are twenty four, and six sixpences are three shillings: that's seven and twenty shillings a week. The wages are not so bad when you are in work.' 'What are you talking about?' said they. 'You mean four and sixpence a day; but we mean four and sixpence a week.' 'Four and sixpence a week!' I exclaimed. You don't mean that men have to work in those stocking-frames that I hear going now, a whole week for four and sixpence. How can they maintain their wives and children?' 'Ay you may well ask that,' said one of them, sadly.

A Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry in 1844, set up in response to a petition signed by 25,000 framework-knitters, heard evidence from John Thurman, a knitter of Shepshed in Leicestershire, who had seven children, and who worked for Messrs. Cotton & Hammond, told the commissioner, Richard Muggeridge, how he disposed of his weekly income of £ 2s 3d:

'The boy and me make four dozen pairs of plain hose in a week. Then I have to pay 2s & 3d frame-rent for the two frames; then I have to pay 2 shillings for seaming and I have to pay 7½pence for needles for the two frames; then I have to pay for candles 4d per week. Then there is oil I have to pay 2d for; then I have the materials to buy towards the frame, wrenches, hammers, keys and everything of that sort. My little boy does the winding, that would be 6d if I was obliged to put anybody else to do it. Then I have coal 1s and 3d per week, that is in the summer we do not use as much as that, but in the winter we use fire, that is, for the house and shop and all . . .

The whole nine of us lie in two beds, and for these two beds we have one blanket for both; and it is out of my power, in any shape whatever, to buy any more without my earnings were more.

I can positively say and it is not my wish or principle to state one word of the least untruth, never a week goes by but I have to put my wife to bed for want of food; anybody that could come forward and knew me, would testify to that . . . when I have got my little on a Saturday I pay every farthing I can, as far as it will go - and then when Monday morning comes I have not got 6d to buy a loaf with and there is nothing in the house. Then whatever few garments we have about us we take them and pledge them into the shop to get a bit of bread to go on with during the week, as long as it will last.'

The destitution of the framework knitters and their families, and the appalling condition of their homes, was acknowledged on every hand. This was attributed by some to a variety of causes entirely beyond their control.

On the other hand, there was evidence to prove that little or no attempt

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was made by the stockinger to improve his lot, many had sunk into apathy. His condition might well have been visualised by Pope when he wrote in his "Essay on Man"

*'of thought and passion, all confused
Still by himself abused or disabused;
Fixed like a plant on his particular spot
To draw nutrition, propagate and rot.'*

Could a more sorrowful picture be painted of the conditions that were prevailing at the time than that conjured up by the evidence of Jabez Chaplain of Hinckley. He said:-

'The general condition of the people at Hinckley was wretched in the extreme. There were hundreds of people here who had no bed to lie on and scarcely any furniture of any sort in their houses. The children were almost naked and without any shoes or stockings. There were many families who existed on 11d to 1s (5 new pence) per head per week.' The Relieving Officer also gave evidence, and said that the homes of the people were in a deplorable state. There were very few of them with more than one sleeping room, where the parents and children of both sexes were all huddled together.'

Somewhat typical of the evidence given by the masters was that of James Jarvis in his evidence showed a disposition to blame the stockinger himself for the poverty-stricken condition of his surroundings. Mr. Jarvis stated that he had made every effort to help his workmen by building a workshop and installing fifty-four improved frames there on the factory system. He then induced a number of men to leave their homes and work there, but after a short time he had to give it up as a failure. His frames were now being worked in the home.

When he employed the men in his workshop Mr. Jarvis said they made as much as 12s. to 24s. weekly, the only deduction being for winding. The average earnings included boys from ten years upwards. There was regular work at all times, the hours being from 7 o'clock in the summer and 8 in the winter to 8 o'clock at night. The sole reason of his giving up the factory, the witness stated, was on account of his not being able to keep the men to any hours at all. The habits of the stockingers were so singular that they would work all night sometimes and play all the day. They would come in and work a day, and then go away, although they could earn half as much again as in their own homes. When he remonstrated with them, they laughed and said they did not like being shut up, as they could not see what was going on.



The interior of the Framework Knitters Museum, Wigston, Leicestershire.

They preferred their liberty even if it meant less pay. He had then five frames in one shop in the town, some worked by youths under 14 who earned 17s to 18s a week clear, but these were steady, expert workmen who worked regularly and orderly, and strove to do their best.

In direct contrast Joshua Clarke, another hosiery manufacturer, who said he was a manufacturer in the making of wrought cotton hose only, employed 300 frames in Hinckley and four or five villages round it. He placed these out to masters of families. Some families worked between them as many as eight or ten frames. After a deduction of 1s. for frame rent, he paid on an average of 6/6d a week in wages. There were certain expenses the stockinger had to meet out of this. The frames were 21, 22, 24 and 26 inch gauge, but the average earnings were the same. The witness said that he believed there was no set of men in the country who had had to endure the privations that the stocking-workers of Hinckley and its neighbourhood were having to endure. However the Hinckley stockingers also received a bad mark from Nicholas Eales the pawnbroker, who stated that what he advanced on their goods frequently went in ale. They were improvident, and any little

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amusement would take them from their work for hours together.

These charges against the moral character of the stockinger however were more than counteracted by the evidence of the Clerk to the Poor Law Union, who said that, *“too much credit could not be given to the men for their peaceable and orderly behaviour.”* The charge of improvidence was certainly not supported by the testimony of the Medical Officer. Whether they laid their money out to the best advantage he could not say, but their earnings were so scanty there was little scope for improvidence.

Unfortunately the Medical Officer was not supported by the Vicar, who stated that there were forty public houses in Hinckley, and they were all full towards night. He therefore attributed the condition of the stockingers a good deal to their own improvident habits. A Hinckley framework knitter named Benjamin Henshaw, who had a wife and four children, deposed that on a Saturday night, after he had taken his work in and paid for his frame rent and needles, he thought himself well off if he had 1½ old pence left over his groceries to buy a bit of meat for the week. With this he used to buy a sheep’s paunch, then had to wash it clean, and dress it.

The following extract from *A History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and lace Manufacturers* written by William Felkin in 1844, about a visit to a Leicester framework knitter highlights the intense suffering undergone by knitters at this time.

‘A female was at work between nine and ten at night: her husband and two journeymen at work above her head up the step ladder over the kitchen she was occupying. Her age she stated to be fifty three: she had the appearance of being seventy: there were bones, sinews and skin, but no appearance of flesh. She had been the mother of fifteen children, ten of whom, male and female, her husband and herself had bred up to be stockingers. From sickness in the morning, she could not work before her breakfast of tea, but labored at night till ten o’clock She had worked the same machine for nineteen years and her earnings were 2s and 6 old pence.’

It was little wonder that Thomas Cooper characterised the Leicester-shire framework-knitter of the time as: *‘worn down, till you might have known him by his peculiar air of misery and dejection, if you had met him a hundred miles from Leicester.’*

It was also common practice for families to stave off hunger by taking opium in a solid form by adults and in a mixture, called Godfrey’s Cordial, by children! It is against this background of intense privation that we have to assess the lives of our framework knitting ancestors. The suffering that



Peter Clowes, curator of the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum, seated at one of the framework knitting machines that is still in working condition

some of our forebears underwent trying to scrape a living and feed their families is difficult to comprehend in our own era, cushioned as we are by the welfare state. We can only admire the courage and fortitude that they displayed, working all hours to try to keep body and soul together. It is little wonder that so many of their children died at an early age from sickness and malnutrition, testimony to the harsh times in which they lived.

Anyone wishing to see what it was like to work at a framework knitting machine could do no better than visiting the Framework Knitters Museum in Wigston, Leicester, illustrated overleaf, where there is a working framework knitting machine. The museum is a Master Hosier’s house with a two storey Victorian framework shop in the garden. The house dates from the last years of the 17th century and shows signs of various alterations. The museum is unique because when the last master hosier, Edgar Carter died in 1952, the workshop was locked and left. Inside on the ground floor were eight hand frames for making gloves, mitts and fancy ribbed tops for golf hose, together

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with all the moulds and tools associated with each machine. This is very late for such a home based industry, but it is evident that a living could be made by hand-frame knitting if one specialised. The last stage of the development was the building of the two storey workshop in the garden in 1890. It is this workshop, with its eight original knitting frames and typically long multi-paned windows, which is the real gem of the museum. This is a must visit museum for all those whose ancestors were involved in this cottage industry.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

The Origins of the Danvers family

Having established that Hugh Danvers of Frolesworth was the first of the Danvers family to settle in Leicestershire and was the ancestor of the Swithland, Shackerstone and Shepshed branches of the family, we now turn our attention to trying to identify the Norman Knight called Alvase who was said to be a companion of William the Conqueror in 1066 mentioned on the 1619 family pedigree on page 2 of this book and also mentioned on the tombstone of Charles Danvers, on page 91, as De Alverse. As we have already noted it was this 1619 pedigree or one similar that inspired Dr. Francis Macnamara to prove or disprove whether or not these claims were justified.

Macnamara spent over six years extensively researching the origins of the Danvers family and we can do no better than record some of the fruits of his research. Macnamara found a record in the Domesday Book that a Robert de Aluers, in the year 1086, held a house in capite, that is, direct from the King, in the city of Northampton. Macnamara also found that there was a village in the Contentin peninsular in Normandy called Alvers or Auvers. This Auvers is in the peninsula of the Cotentin, which was formerly a part of the dukedom of Normandy. Auvers is situated three or four miles west of Carentan, a town at the base of the peninsula, while about twelve miles north-west of Auvers is the town of St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte.

It might be pertinent here to mention that the name of Danvers is written in early documents in many forms even within the same document. So we must consider the name De Alvers or Alvase which at first glance doesn't appear to be anything like the name Danvers. The first change was that of the *L* into *U*, a change very common at the time, and especially so in the case of proper names, thus, Chevaleschal became Chevauschesal, the name of the village of Alvers, became Auvers, and that of its lords either de Alvers or de Auvers.

Next the *E* of *De* was omitted, and the *D* became the first letter of the name, which was then written Dalvers or Dauvers. Further, it must be remembered that the *V* had no character of its own, it was written as a *U*. But for the *N* and the *U* we have in the ancient manuscripts just two straight strokes. Dauvers would be written Da, then four strokes for the *U* and the *V* and then *ERS*. But the eye alone is unable to determine in what way these strokes are to be read; the name might be Dauurs or Danuers, Dauners or Danners. In the year 1297 Sir Thomas Danvers was summoned to military service as de Anuers, de Auners, Danvers and Daunvers.

De Alvers and de Auvers were the oldest forms of the name, next came Dauvers, then we have de Auners, de Anuers, Dauvers, Danuers, Dauners, Danners. De Anuers or Danuers were the more common forms; eventually the *U* was pronounced as a *V*, and the bearer of the name was finally called Danvers.

We may now consider how Robert de Aluers (or de Alvers) acquired a house at Northampton, and whence he came. Northampton was an important town at the period of the Conquest, one which had often figured in the wars of the Danes and Saxons. Here, after the Conquest, Simon de St. Liz, whom William made Earl of Northampton, built a strong castle, in which many great councils were held during the reigns of the Norman kings.

The Domesday Book tells us that in the reign of Edward the Confessor the town had sixty burgesses and as many mansions. At the time of the Survey the three largest householders were Robert de Mortain, who, as his share of the spoil of the town, had thirty-seven mansions; William de Peverel, who had thirty-two; and the Bishop of Coutance, who had twenty three.

Macnamara discovered in a book written by two French antiquarians that Robert de Alvers is mentioned in the first part of their work, 'Recherches sur le Domesday.' These gentlemen, accomplished Norman antiquaries, made themselves thoroughly acquainted with all that they could learn from the ancient records of the province regarding the history of the Norman families of the period of the Conquest. They mentioned the following:

'Alvers, Robert de,' obtained a house in Northampton from the Conqueror, and was himself of French origin, and the source of the English family of the name.

We also find that about the year 1090 that a William de Auvers, son of Helge, gives to the Abbey of St. Sauveur, in Contentin, the tithes of the mill of Neuville and the tithes of three vassals. Robert de Auvers, also gave to the abbey all that he held in the church of Auvers, and the tithes of a mill in Tornebose. Robert also gives the tithes which he holds in Auvers, and three cottages.

We may gather from the above that the de Auvers family was one well known by that name, and that they were a family of good standing, having vassals, and property in three places besides that which they possessed in the village of Auvers. And we think there are two considerations which may be made use of to support the view that it was from this branch of the family that the English family took their origin, and they are as follows: The family

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of Auvers and that of the Harcourts were neighbours in the Cotentin, and we find that shortly after the Conquest these families were together large land holders in the village of Frolesworth, in Leicester, and it may be worth noting that, at the time of the Survey, a Robert, possibly Robert de Alvers of Northampton, held the manor of Schernford, only two miles distant from Frolesworth.

Also we find there is a connection between the de Auvers family of the Cotentin, and Robert Danvers of Northampton, for Auvers in Cotentin was in the diocese of Geoffrey de Mowbray, Bishop of Coutances, who, as we have seen, was one of the three largest householders in Northampton, and who was a kinsman of Neel, lord of St. Sauveur and Auvers.

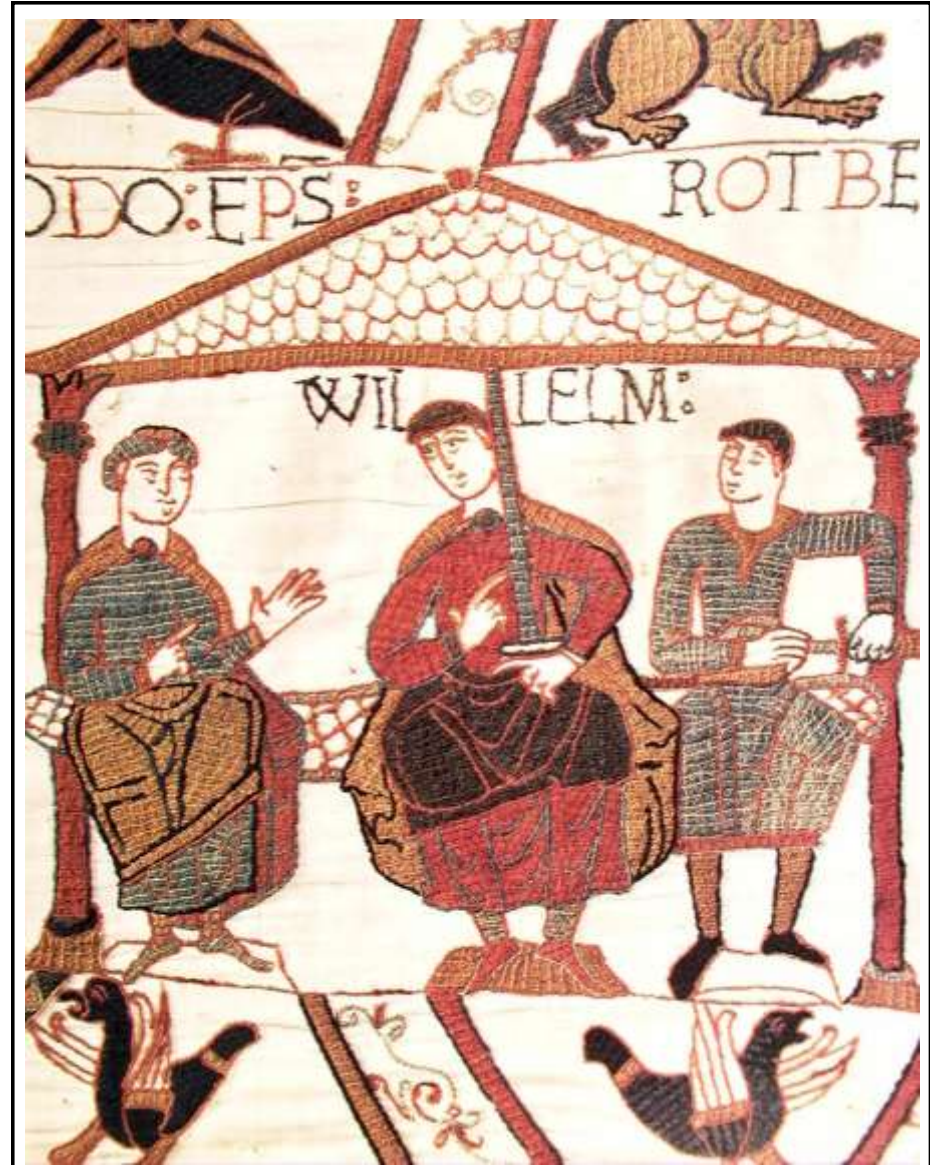
Not improbably Robert de Auvers may have been one of the knights who fought under the Bishop's banner as lord of St. Lo, and thus we may account for the presence of the knight with his one house, and the Bishop with his three and-twenty, together in Northampton.

Amongst the Harleian collection of manuscripts is one, No. 4031, which includes an interesting sketch of the origin of the Danvers family in England, and runs as follows :

Danvers, whose surname Alverse or Aluers, after ye French pronunciation Auvers, is now written Danvers. Alvers was the name of a village or town in France within or adjoining the Duchy of Normandie, from whence there came a knight into England with William, Duke of Normandie, at the Conquest, who being planted here in regard of that Towne, of which before his coming he was, both he himself at that time, and his posterity were surnamed by the same and called diversly at divers times, but in terms not much differing, de Alverse, de Aluers and de Auvers and now at last Danvers.

The Norman knight of Alvers came into England at the Conquest with William the Conqueror, and was preferred to sundry lands and livings in the County of Bucks, Oxon and Berks, whereof the greatest parte had been ye inheritance of one Lewyn, an English Earle before ye Conquest.

And which lands for the most parte he held by a knights service of Robert, Earl of Morteyn and Cornwall, of Odo Bishop of Bayeaux and Earle of Kent, and of Miles Crispin, Lord of Wallingford, who were all three half-brothers by ye mother to King William the Conqueror; insomuch as he is therefore supposed to have been of affinity to ye said King by his mother. Which seemeth the more likely, for of his posterity some had ye Christian names of Rolland, Randulph, as some of ye ancestors of Arlotte, mother of ye King, had.



A very small section from the Bayeux Tapestry showing William the Conqueror seated with his two half brothers, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Robert, Earl of Morteyn, on either side of him

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Collins, in his 'English Baronetage' (edition of 1771, vol. 1, p. 449), says that the family of Danvers descended from Roland d' Auvers, who entered England with William the Conqueror, whose son Ranulph received of Crispin, Lord of Wallingford, whose knight he was, the manors of Dorney, Marlow, and Hitcham, to hold of his honor of Wallingford, his son Roland was Dapifer to the Baron of Wallingford (Brian Fitz-Count).

Amongst the Harleian, Lansdowne, and additional manuscripts many genealogies of the Danvers family may be consulted. As regards the earliest members of the English family of the name, these genealogies, though they differ, all agree in this, that a Ralph, or Ranulph, of Little Marlow, Hitcham and Dorney, was the son of the Norman knight who came to England with the Conqueror, and the common ancestor of the Danvers of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire.

We have given our reasons for believing that the ancestor of the family came from Alvers (now Auvers) in the Cotentin in the year 1066, while twenty years after this we find a Robert de Alvers holding in capite a house in Northampton, and we have adduced evidence that about the same time a Ralph Danvers, son of the earliest member of the English family, was seated in Marlow, Hitcham, and Dorney, holding his lands of Miles Crispin, lord of the honor of Wallingford. Now, we believe that this Ralph Danvers is the second member of the family of whom there is record in the Domesday Book, for there we find that Ralph held the manor of Dorney of Miles Crispin, as of the honor of Wallingford, while Roger, who was Ralph's brother, held of Miles Crispin in Marlow and Hitcham, and Roger held, also of Miles Crispin, in Soleburie.

That Ralph and Roger of the Domesday record belonged to the Danvers family receives strong support from a pedigree of the family which was compiled by Augustin Vincent, and is on record at the College of Heralds. We will only add, in confirmation of it, that Sir William Dugdale who, in the year 1638, joined the Heralds' College, repeats Vincent's statement that the Danvers family in England were descended from a Sir Roland d'Alvers that came in with the Conqueror.

Therefore we may confidently assume that Sir Roland de Alvers was the first of the name in England, the father of Sir Ralph, of Marlow, Dorney, and Hitcham, and of Roger of Marlow and Soleburie, and father, or possibly uncle, of Robert de Alvers of Northampton. It is true that Vincent does not mention Robert amongst the sons of Roland; but then he was writing only of the Bucks and Oxon branches of the family, and besides he may not have

met with any record of Robert's descent, and did not therefore introduce his name into the pedigree.

But it is only reasonable to suppose that this Robert of Northampton was the ancestor of the Danvers family of Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, a family which from the earliest times tradition and similarity of cognizance have allied to the other branch of the family in England.

John Phillpotts, Somerset Herald in 1633, amongst his collections (Lansdowne MSS., No. 269, p. 258) has a note regarding the family which asserts that the Norman de Aluerse, his Christian name is not given, who came into England at the time of the Conquest, was the progenitor of the families both of Buckinghamshire and of Leicestershire.

Sir Roland was probably born about the same time as the Conqueror, and may very well have been brother to William de Auvers the son of Helge, whom we find amongst the early benefactors of the Convent of St. Sauveur le Vicomte.

It seems likely that he arrived in England at the time of the Conquest, in A.D. 1066, as we find his sons holding manors when the Survey was completed in the year 1086. Probably Roland was then dead, or possibly he may have returned to Normandy, leaving his sons in possession of the inheritance which he had won in England.

That venerable volume the Liber Niger of the Exchequer, so called 'niger' from the black colour of its covers, was compiled during the reign of Henry II, and includes a list of the knights' fees of the kingdom during the year 1165 or 1166, a list which was prepared in anticipation of an aid to be demanded by Henry II on the occasion of the marriage of his eldest daughter Matilda with Henry the Lion, of Saxony. The list in question returns the names of the King's tenants in capite, who certify how many fees each holds and the names of those who hold them. In the list, not forgetting that the list is one of unimpeachable authenticity, we find the names of three members of the Danvers family. In Northampton Hugh de Auvers holds thirteen and a half carucates of land of Godfrey Ridel, the noble who succeeded Ranulph Glanville as Justiciar of the kingdom. In Berkshire, of the honor of Wallingford, Roland de Aluerse holds two knights' fees; while in Warwickshire Robert de Aluers of Shuckborough holds three knights' fees of William, Earl of Warwick.

Although Hugh is mentioned in the Liber Niger Vincent himself does not mention Hugh of Northampton. However the author of the pedigree in the Lansdowne MS., 269, makes him the younger brother of Sir Ralph of

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Marlow and the ancestor of the Danvers of Frolesworth and Shakerstone in Leicester.

At the beginning of this book we mentioned that Nichols states that very soon after the Conquest the lordship of Frolesworth was in the possession of a Norman, Thomas de Sacheville, and that at the same period the families of Danvers and Harcourt were considerable landholders there. Felicia, daughter of Thomas de Sacheville, carried the lordship to the Danvers family by her marriage with Hugh de Auvers, a marriage which is authenticated by a charter quoted by Mr. Nichols, by which Hugh and his wife Felicia make a donation to the church in Frolesworth.

Summarising the evidence we have regarding the descent of the Danvers family, we may assume, on the authority of Vincent and Dugdale, that the first of the name in England was Roland de Alvers. Then we have the sons of Roland being Ralph of Marlow and Dorney, Roger of Soleburie, Almar of Bourton, and possibly Robert of Northampton, who was considered to be the ancestor of the Leicestershire Danvers family.

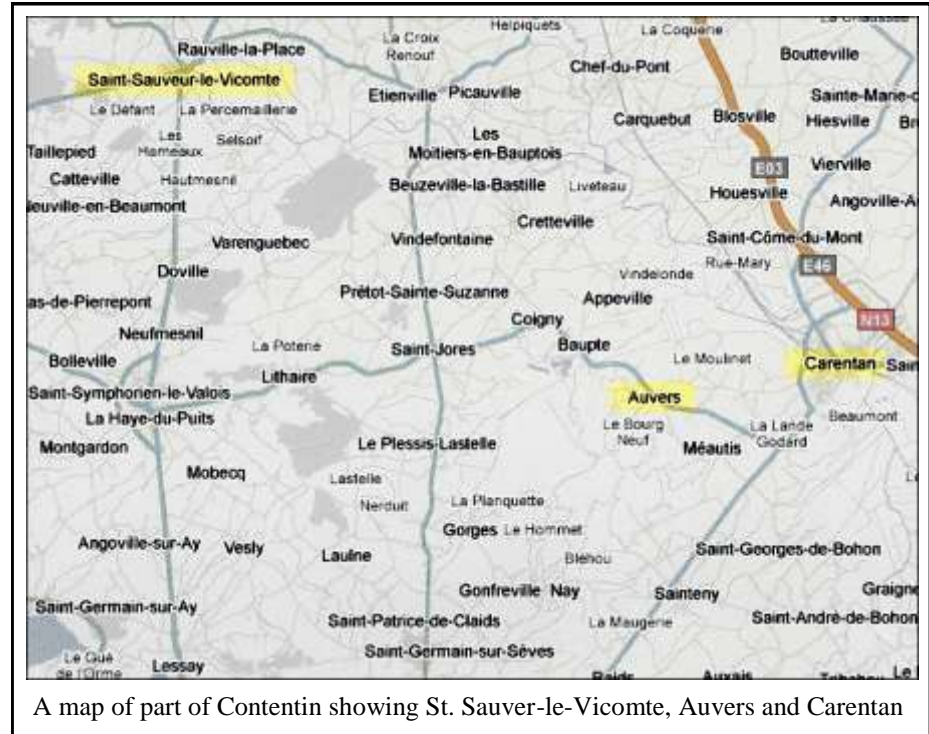
One very interesting point that might place this Robert of Northampton into a more direct lineage with Roland is that of the tradition common to the Danvers family regarding the marriage of their common ancestor with the daughter of Torold, the Saxon Thegn.

Macnamara believed that the tradition had its origin in a claim made by Roland Danvers in the year 1207, that certain lands in Woghfeld in Berks belonged to him in right of their having come to an ancestor as dower on his marriage with the daughter of Torold the son of Geoffrey. But Roland does not say who this ancestor was; he may have been, as Phillipotts asserts, the Sir Roland of the time of the Conquest.

If so, Sir Roland married the lady in question before the Conquest, for we have seen that, nineteen or twenty years after the Conquest, he had sons of age (over the age of 21) and capable of holding manors. Either that or Sir Roland married shortly after the Conquest and died before the completion of the Domesday Survey, when his manors had been divided amongst his sons, whose names appear in the Domesday record.

However there is no real evidence that it was the first Roland de Alvers who married the Saxon heiress; the bridegroom may have been his grandson, the second Roland, great-grandfather to the Roland of 1207. If that were true then the Swithland Danvers would possibly not be able to lay claim to the tradition that Torold was their ancestor as well.

As the lands which Roland claimed were in Berkshire, the probability is



A map of part of Contentin showing St. Sauver-le-Vicomte, Auvers and Carentan

that Torold was a thegn of that county, a county in which after the Conquest were many orphans and widows; for, as Professor Freeman writes, *'To have been a thegn of Berkshire implied almost as a matter of course that he had died at Senlac.'* And it may be noticed that the village of Aston or Easton on the Berkshire downs, has from time immemorial been known as 'Aston-Torold,' and at an early period became a possession of the Danvers family.

From the evidence we have seen in Macnamara's notes we feel confident to state that the Hugh Danvers of Frolesworth was almost certainly related to Robert de Alvers of Northampton. The Liber Niger also mentions a Hugh de Auvers of Northampton in 1165 which provides us with a more direct link to this Robert.

Unfortunately we have no actual recorded evidence to link this Hugh de Auvers of Northampton to Robert. If we take the timescale of almost 80 years between the two men into consideration, this Hugh de Auvers must have been the great grandson of Robert of Northampton. There is also a strong possibility that this Hugh de Auvers may have been the father of our

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Hugh Danvers of Frolesworth as it was common for families at that time to name one of their sons after their father. So in spite of all our research and the evidence we have found we still cannot give a definitive answer to the question of where our Frolesworth ancestors actually originated and so until further documentation or evidence is found the above is possibly the best we are going to come up with.

Unfortunately there is a rather large fly in the ointment with respect to the Swithland ancestry as far as their family tradition is concerned. On the 1619 pedigree prepared by Samson Lennard and Augustine Vincent, as seen on page 2, the Norman knight Alvase is mentioned as being a Brabanter. This suggests that the Danvers family of Swithland believed their ancestor originally came from the Brabant region of Belgium and may have been named Anvers after the French name for Antwerp, hence the early name De Anvers.

Augustine Vincent entered the College of Heralds about the year 1615, and early in his career became the favourite assistant of Camden, who employed him as his deputy in some of his visitations. Vincent was also under keeper of the records in the Tower, records from which he made voluminous collections. He was a man, we are told, of great ability and industry, and all his work is still esteemed as being of a very trustworthy character. He also made the pedigrees of the Ralph and Roger Danvers of the Domesday record in which he determined that their ancestor Roland came from Alvers in Normandy.

So did he ignore that branch of the Danvers family when he came to the Swithland visitation or was he swayed by the Swithland family traditions of their ancestry? Strangely the Swithland Danvers always claimed the other Danvers families as their cousins or relatives in their correspondence. It was a letter that Macnamara found written by Sir John Danvers Baronet to John Danvers of Hornsey in which he described him as "his relative and friend."

The Swithland family also have the same ancestral legend, that of their Norman ancestor Alvase or de Alvers coming over with William the Conqueror and marrying the daughter of Torold, the son of Geoffrey the Saxon.

If Alvase was a Brabanter it would mean that he might well have been a mercenary joining William's army in the hope of spoils to come. But this does not appear to tie in with what we have discovered regarding other branches of the family. So like all good family histories we have to leave this one as being something of a mystery and hope that perhaps in years to come further evidence may be found to either disprove or substantiate this claim.



The Domesday Book

The Domesday Book is the earliest, and by far the most famous, English public record. It is the record of a survey which, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, William the Conqueror ordered to be taken at Christmas 1085; a survey so thorough that not 'one ox nor one cow nor one pig' was omitted. This is something of an overstatement: there are no Domesday entries at all for Durham or Northumberland, and few for Cumberland, Westmorland or northern Lancashire (although some parts of Wales near the English border are included). A number of towns were also omitted, notably London, Winchester and Bristol.

For the remainder of the country, there is a very detailed survey, describing the value, the population and the resources of each manor. The authority of the record was immense, and within a century it had acquired its popular nickname of 'Domesday' because, like the Last Judgment, there could be no appeal against its statements. Its interest to genealogists, of course, arises because it names the tenants in chief, and many of those who held manors as their immediate tenants, both at the time of the survey, and before the Norman conquest in the reign of Edward the Confessor. The humbler classes, as a rule, were counted but not named.

For some parts of the country, the Domesday survey has left behind more detailed records still. The eastern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex are not included in the main volume, known as 'Great Domesday', but are covered in a separate volume - 'Little Domesday' - which is thought to reflect an earlier stage in the editing of the original returns.

Rothley and the Babington Connection

Of all the families that the Danvers of Swithland married into perhaps one of the most interesting and most important was the Babington family. It is through intermarriage with the Babington family that takes our ancestral story back, firstly to the powerful Beaumont family, then through that family to the Royal family of the middle ages, in particular the Plantagenet Kings and Queens such as Henry III and his ancestors.

The first member of the Swithland Danvers to marry a Babington was William Danvers who married Elizabeth Babington on the 4th of November 1618. Interestingly they were third cousins through Richard Cave their great, great grandfather. Her family ancestry is recorded in the next column.

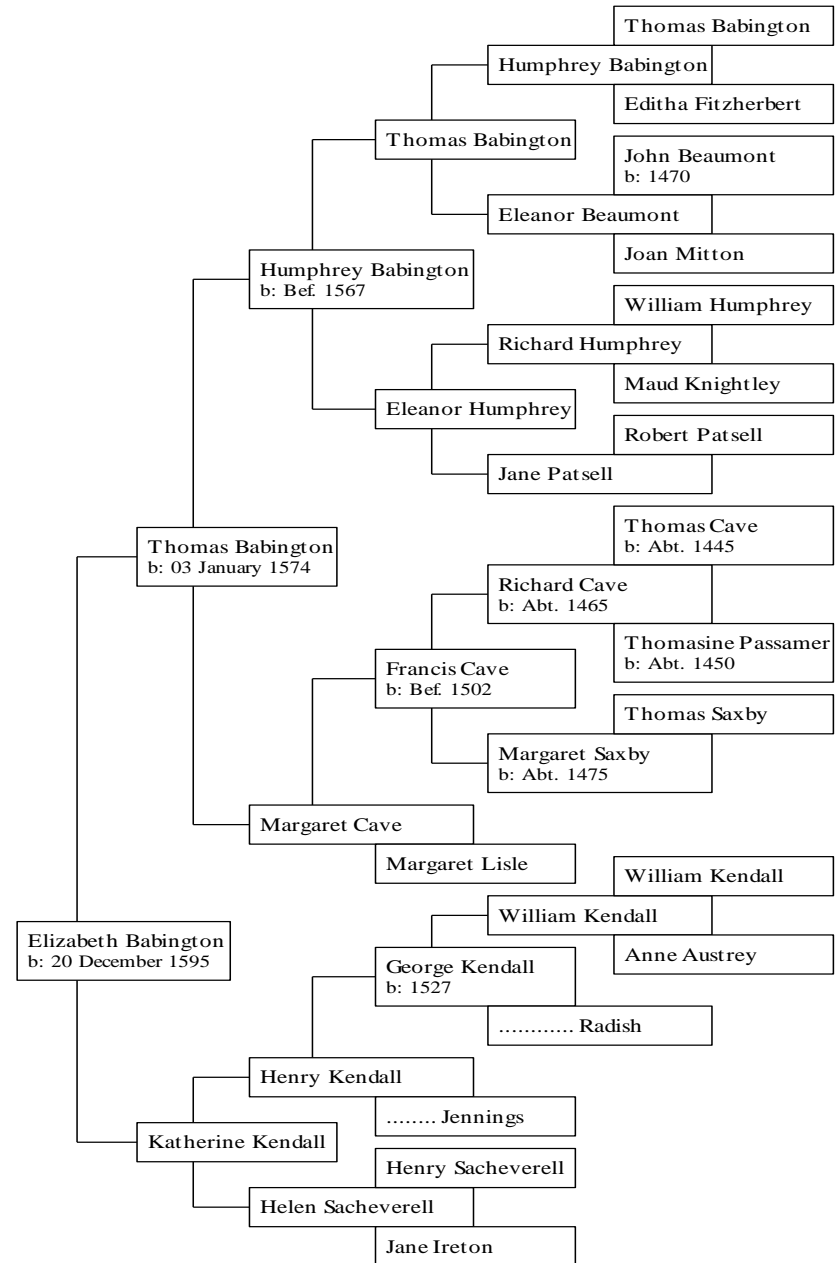
The Babington family were a very prominent and important family in Leicestershire. Elizabeth Babington's father Thomas Babington was born on the 3rd of January 1574 in Rothley, Leicestershire. He married Katherine Kendall, in 1588 the daughter of Henry Kendall, after having 11 children she died and was buried on the 21st of February 1658 in Rothley. Thomas Babington, having passed away 13 years previously, was buried on the 17th of September 1645. Thomas Babington's mother Margaret Cave introduces us to another important Leicestershire family, the Cave family.

Stanford Hall near Lutterworth has been the home of the Cave family, since 1430. In the 1690's, Sir Roger Cave commissioned the Smiths of Warwick to pull down the old manor House (adjacent to the church) and build the present hall, which is a superb example of their work and the William and Mary period. Margaret Cave's grandfather, Richard Cave, who was born in 1465, drew up a marriage settlement on the 9th of January 1517 - 1518, which relates to the Swithland Danvers family, as follows:

Marriage settlement between Richard Cave and Elizabeth Danvers, one of the daughters of John Danvers. Covenant, Richard Cave covenants that Thomas Cave shall marry Elizabeth Danvers when she is 15. To deliver Elizabeth Danvers to Richard Cave on Saturday next before Mid Lent Sunday after date of presents, to be troth plighted to Thomas Cave, or other son of Richard Cave, if both parties agree. Land granted by Richard Cave on marriage, and should Thomas Cave die during the lifetime of his father then land in Burton Overy Leicestershire to be held to use of Elizabeth.

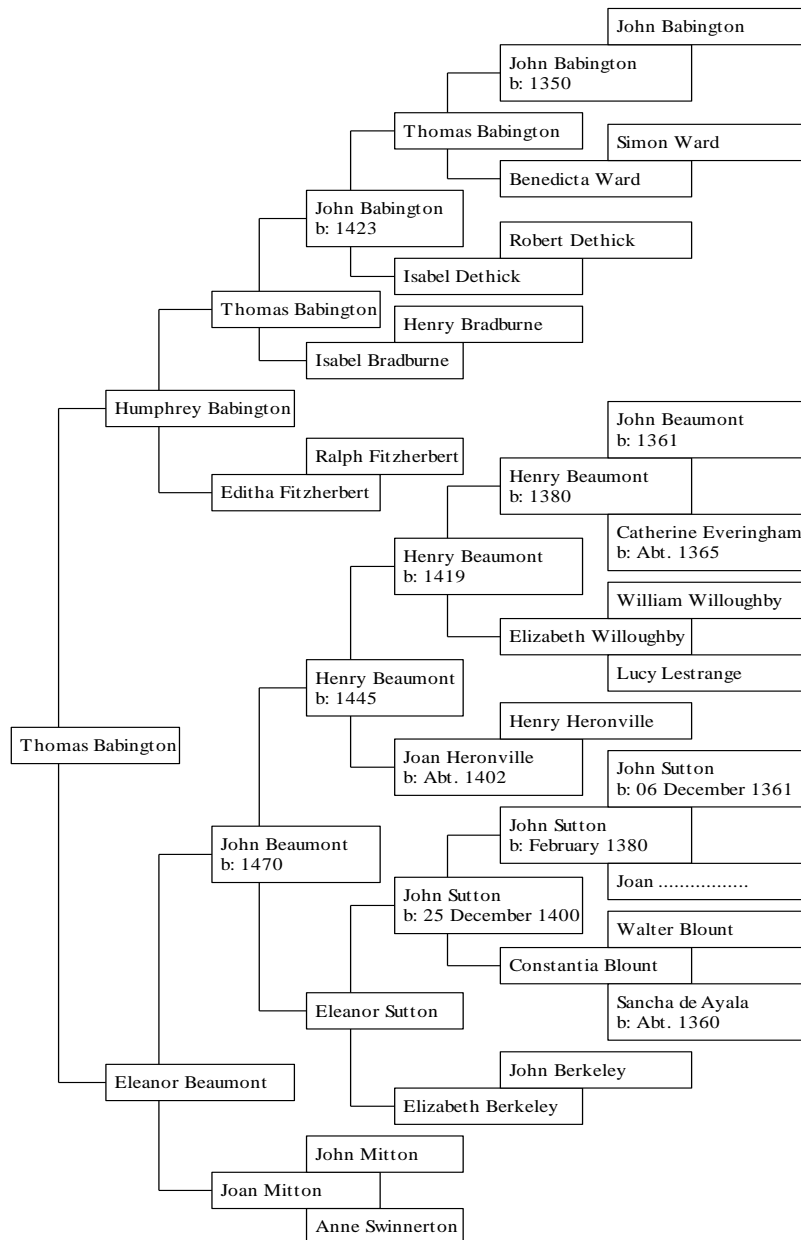
This Elizabeth Danvers finally married Thomas Cave, who was Lord of the whole manor of Stanford, about four years later in February 1522 and we have the following record of their tombs in Stanford church:

Ancestors of Elizabeth Babington



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Ancestors of Thomas Babington



The tomb of Thomas Cave stands between 2 arches of the nave arcade. He died in 1558 but his recumbent effigy has early Tudor armour, but his wife has the close-fitting cap as seen in portraits of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Queen of Scots. The marginal inscription, which is still in gothic lettering, tells us that he was Lord of the Manor of Stanforde. At the foot of his tomb are panels showing rows of kneeling sons and daughters amongst them are Roger Cave, who inherited his fathers estates and married Margaret Cecil sister to William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

If we follow Elizabeth Babington's ancestral line through to her great grandfather Thomas Babington we see the first of the Beaumont family with his mother Eleanor Beaumont and her father John Beaumont born in 1470.

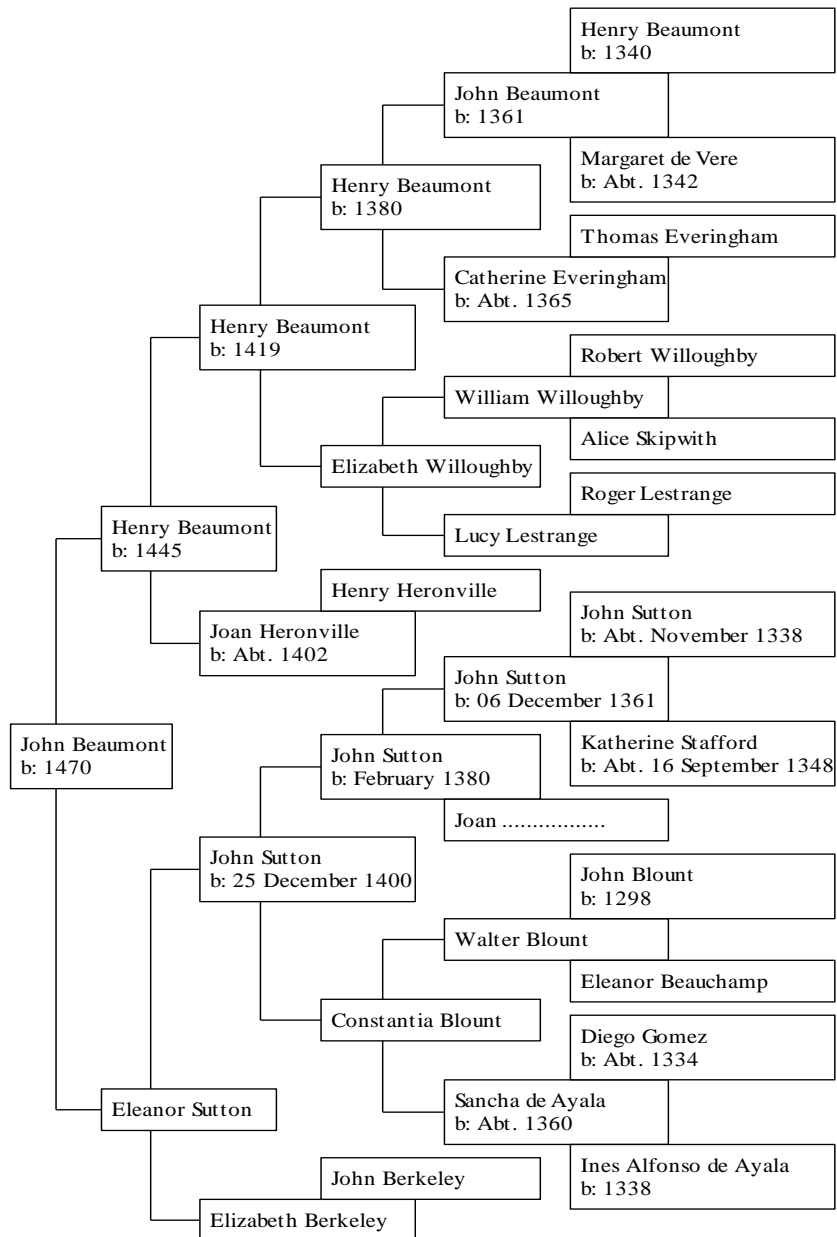
The Norman family of Beaumont was one of the great baronial Anglo-Norman families which became rooted in England after the Conquest. Roger de Beaumont, lord of Pont-Audemer, was too old to fight at Hastings, and stayed in Normandy to govern and protect it whilst William was away on the invasion. As a reward he received lands in Leicestershire. His son Robert de Beaumont, comte de Meulan, who commanded the Norman right wing at Hastings, became the first earl of Leicester. His brother Henri de Beaumont was created earl of Warwick. During King Stephen's reign, the twins Galéran and Robert were powerful allies to the king, and as a reward Galéran was made earl of Worcester. Counsel from the Beaumonts was much listened to by the dukes of Normandy, then by the kings of England.

If we begin with John Beaumont, born 1470, on the next page, there is a fascinating connection to be made through his grandfather, John Sutton. His mother was Constantia Blount, the daughter of Sancha de Ayala and Walter Blount. If we follow her mother's line it takes us to the Kings of Castille and Navarre and eventually to Rodrigo Díaz de Bivar, better known to us all as El Cid! As we have already seen this is a family tree full of connections to some of the most famous families not only in England but also in Europe; but it doesn't stop there. Starting with Henry Beaumont born in 1340 at the top of the tree on the next page, his mother was Eleanor Wrynock, and she is the link to that infamous royal family, the Plantagenet Kings of England.

Eleanor's father was Henry Wrynock, whose ancestral tree may be seen on page 131, the son of Edmund Plantagenet also known as Crouchback which meant Crossback or Crusader. Edmund in turn was the son of King Henry III of England as we can see from the ancestral tree. Through Henry Wrynock's mother, Blanche de Artois we also see links to the Kings of France namely Louis VIII and Philippe II.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

Ancestors of John Beaumont



Returning to Henry III and following the tree to his father the notorious King John, he of the renowned Magna Carta, John was the son of one of the most powerful of all the English Kings, Henry II and his equally formidable wife Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Henry II came to the English throne at the age of 21 on the death of King Stephen, in 1154, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Wallingford. A short but strongly built man of leonine appearance, Henry II was possessed of an immense dynamic energy and a formidable temper. He had the red hair of the Plantagenets, grey eyes that grew bloodshot in anger and a round, freckled face. He spent so much time in the saddle that his legs became bowed. Henry's voice was reported to have been harsh and cracked, he did not care for magnificent clothing and was never still. The new King was highly intelligent and had acquired an immense knowledge both of law and languages .

His wife Queen Eleanor was eleven years older than Henry, but in the early days of their marriage that did not seem to matter. Both were strong characters, used to getting their own way. The result of two such ill matched temperaments was an extremely tempestuous union. Beautiful, intelligent, cultured and powerful, Eleanor was a remarkable woman. One of the great female personalities of her age, she had been celebrated and idolized in the songs of the troubadours of her native Aquitaine.

Henry II was the son of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, and Matilda the daughter of King Henry I of England. Geoffrey Plantagenet is an interesting character from the point of view of heraldic history. For a long time heraldists believed that the earliest documented arms were those of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, who died in 1151. On his enamelled funeral plaque, formerly in Le Mans Cathedral, he is shown holding a huge azure shield strewn with golden lions (see over). A chronicler from Anjou tells that on his marriage in 1127 Geoffrey received from his father-in-law, Henry I, a shield strewn with lions. Unfortunately this text was written towards 1175, in fact almost twenty-five years after the death of Geoffrey, and the funerary plaque was created around 1155-60, at the request of his widow Matilda. So it is probable that Geoffrey Plantagenet never bore arms.

Continuing to follow Henry II's family tree we first come to his father Henry I, also known as Beauclerc for his scholarly interests. Then we come next to his father, the most celebrated king in English history, William I, also known as William the Conqueror.

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

How many other families can boast such an incredible bloodline as that of the Babington and, of course by marriage, the Danvers families?

Joseph Danvers born on the 24th of December 1687 was the second of the Danvers family to marry into the Babington family. He was the great grandson of William Danvers, who married Elizabeth Babington. Joseph married Frances Babington on the 7th of December 1721 in St. Paul's church in London. Frances was the grandniece of Elizabeth Babington and as such her family tree is very similar to that of her grand aunt.

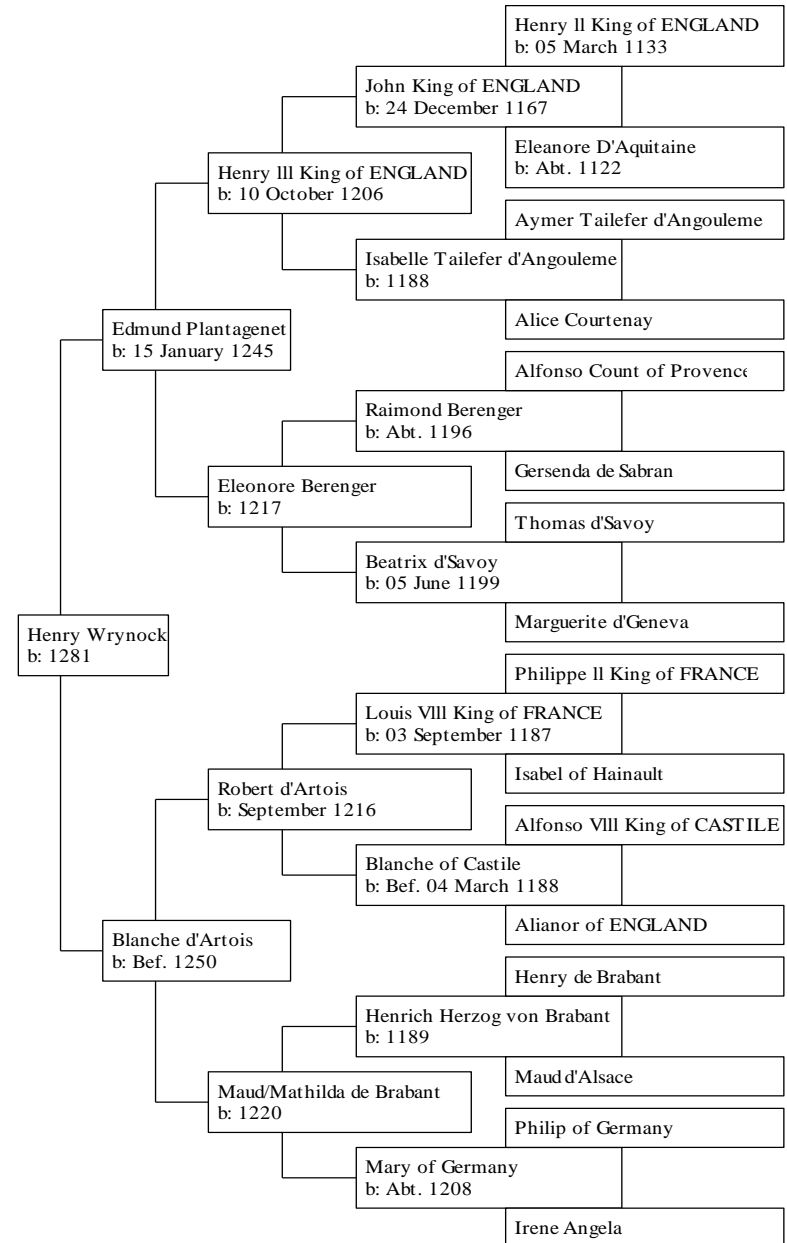


Although tradition suggests that the Babington family originated from Normandy, the earliest members in this country, that can be traced, come from Babington (now Bavington) Parva in Northumberland. By the sixteenth century a branch of the family had established themselves in Leicestershire at Cossington and, sometime around 1600 an offshoot of this branch of the family established themselves at Rothley Temple in the same county.

In the Middle Ages Rothley was home to a manor of the Knights Templar known as Rothley Temple, now the Rothley Court Hotel, which passed to the Babington family after the dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century. The Babington family held the manor for almost 300 years until the death of Thomas Babington in 1837.

The Church at Rothley has several interesting monuments to the Babington family, two of which are ancestors of the Danvers family and are well worth visiting, see next page.

Ancestors of Henry Wrynock



Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The Memorial to Thomas Babington, his wife Elinor and their sons and daughters

Above is the memorial tablet on the wall of the North aisle in Rothley Church to Thomas Babington, his wife Elinor and their sons and daughters. Thomas, the son of Humphrey Babington, purchased the Manor outright in 1565 beginning nearly 300 years of Babington Lordship.

The picture below shows the tomb of Humphrey Babington, who died in 1544, and his wife Eleanor Beaumont, of the Royal family of Beaumont, who was descended from King Henry III. Humphrey Babington was the first tenant of the Manor of Rothley after the Reformation.

His son Thomas is pictured on the box tomb and may be seen kneeling at a desk on the side of the tomb pictured below. Note the supporters on the shield of Arms, “Baboons on Tuns,” which is a pun on the name Babington

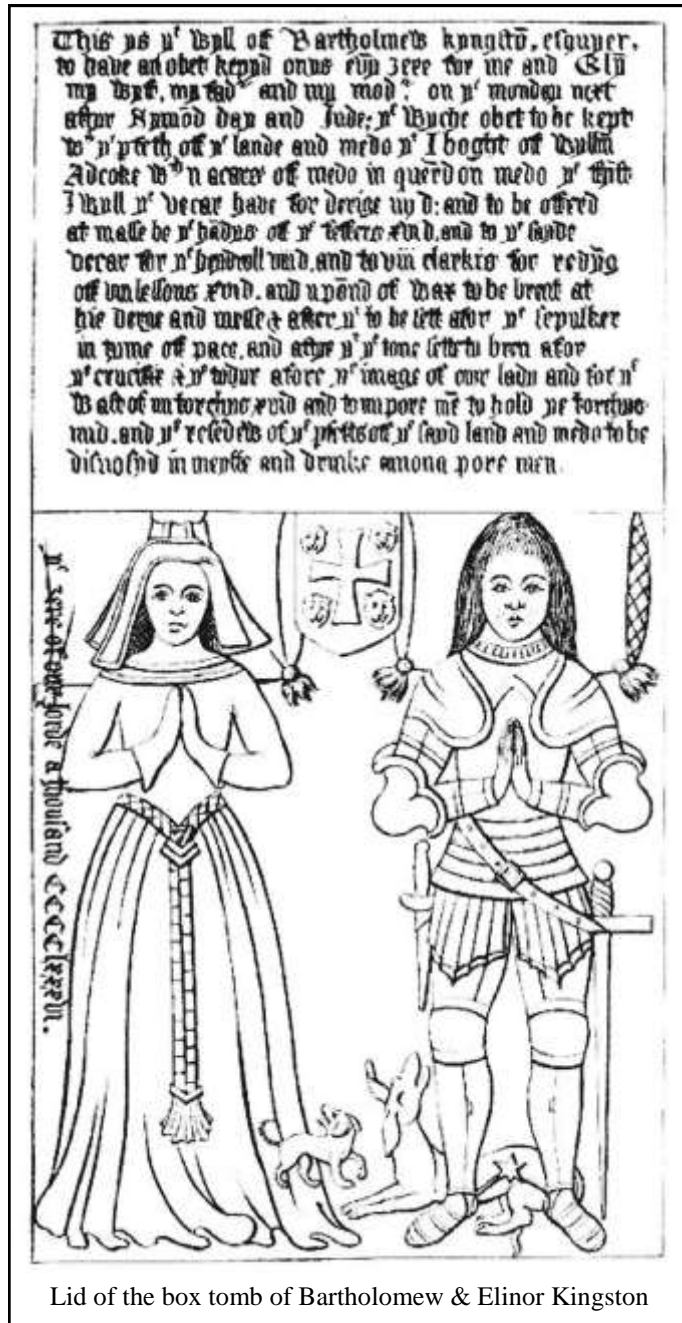


The Box Tomb of Humphrey Babington and his wife Eleanor Beaumont

Also of great interest to the Danvers family in Rothley church are two monuments to the Kingston Family. The first is the monument to George Kingston and his wife Mary Skeffington which may be found on the South aisle dated 1549. It is an alabaster tablet which was once part of a box tomb and features the Kingston arms supported by mermaids combing their hair.

George Kingston is an ancestor of the Danvers family as his daughter Margaret married Francis Danvers of Swithland who was born circa 1508, (see the family tree on page 18.)

The second monument is the tomb of Bartholomew Kingston and his



wife Elinor in the North aisle (see the drawing opposite taken from Nichols book). On this unique tomb are incised his and her images together with his will which is dated 1486. Bartholomew was George Kingston's cousin. The Kingston family was prominent in Rothley in the 15th and 16th centuries and according to Nichols seem to have been men of good account.

George Kingston's brother William is also worth mentioning. He was



knighted in 1513 and appointed constable of the Tower of London in 1524. In the November of 1530 he was sent to Sheffield Park to bring Cardinal Wolsey back to London. However the unfortunate Cardinal fell ill on the way and died on the 29th November at Leicester Abbey. Sir William also had charge of Queen Anne Boleyn at the Tower from the 2nd of May 1536 to her execution on 19th May on Tower Green. On the 24th of April 1540 he was made a Knight of the Garter, but later died the same year.

Also of interest, Sir John Danvers of Swithland owned a Country House in Rothley, called the Grange, with 9 Bedrooms, 4 Maids Rooms, a very large Lounge, Hall, Dining Library, Butler's Pantry, Servant's Hall, and 5 Closes of Pasture. He rented the property to a local farmer. As the Old Hall at Swithland was destroyed by fire it may be the only Danvers property still extant that may be seen, albeit somewhat altered. For further details view:- <http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/rothley/thegrangefowkestreet.html>

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



The Parish Church of St. Mary & St. John, Rothley, Leicestershire. A late 12th and early 13th century structure with alterations in the 15th & 16th centuries.

Final Thoughts

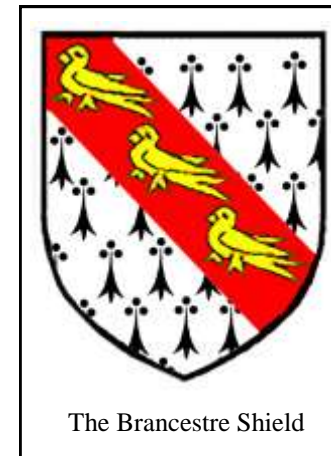
I believe we have managed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the Danvers family of Frolesworth didn't die out as was assumed by Macnamara in his book "The Memorials of the Danvers Family" when he suggested that the family had terminated in the male line with Nicholas Danvers whose daughter married John Aumari, see page 4. We have discovered that there were at least two younger branches of the family in other parts of the county, notably in Ashby Parva and Shackerstone. The only clue we have to the Ralph Danvers who was the first of the family to live in Shackerstone is that he is mentioned as having been the grandson or great grandson of Hugh Danvers of Frolesworth, see page 9, unfortunately we haven't discovered the family connection to Frolesworth so far in our researches.

We know that Nichols in his "History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester" on page 1047 tells us that "John Danvers who by marrying Elizabeth (actually Margaret) eldest daughter and one of the two coheirs of John de Walcote became possessed of a moiety (a half share) of this lordship, was a descendant of a family long seated at Frolesworth and Shakerston in this county: a younger branch of the Danvers of Culworth in Northamptonshire; and possessed of considerable property in several other counties." He also traces the ancestry of John Danvers who married Margaret Walcote to Stephen Danvers' son, Henry of Frolesworth. But this seems highly unlikely as Nicholas Danvers is stated to have been the heir of Henry, which is mentioned on page 8 and if Henry had a son he would presumably have made him his heir.

In contrast Macnamara states that John Danvers who married Margaret Walcote was the son of John Danvers of Calthorpe and Alice Verney. However in his Guildhall notes Mr. E. J. Danvers pointed out that if this John Danvers of Calthorpe married Alice Verney about 1399 it is hardly likely that he had a son John who was married by 1412. Also Macnamara points out that John Danvers and Alice had a son John who was in Holy Orders who gave his brother Richard all rights to his manors formerly belonging to his brother Robert. It would seem unlikely that John Danvers of Calthorpe would have two sons by the name of John but Macnamara explains this away, almost too conveniently, by suggesting that this second John in Holy Orders may have been the result of his marriage to his second wife Joan Bruley. As John Danvers of Swithland had died prior to 1427 Macnamara

felt that it was possible that they named a second son John born after the death of his half brother. We have also noted on page 15 that Nichols states in his History vol: 4 part 1 page 214 that the granddaughter of Geoffrey de Walcote married John Danvers of Frolesworth, so all the evidence we have managed to uncover keeps pointing to the fact that the John Danvers who married Margaret Walcote was from the Shackerstone Danvers family via the Danvers of Frolesworth, but, and it is a very big but, we still haven't resolved the problem of the Brancestre coat of arms being on the coat of arms of the Swithland Danvers..

In the Lay Subsidy Roll 161/46 of the 2nd Richard II, John Brancestre, armiger, heads the list of payments. This was the John Brancestre whose daughter and heiress Richard Danvers married and regarding whom Beesley writes:



The Brancestre Shield

"For some generations Calthorpe in Oxfordshire was the residence of the family of Danvers. Richard Danvers styled of Calthorpe married the heiress of John Brancestre of Calthorpe and is said to have been descended from Roland D'Anvers of the time of William the Conqueror; he had a son John Danvers styled of Banbury and Calthorpe who lived in the reigns of Henry the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth. This Richard Danvers assumed the Brancestre coat of arms: ermine on a bend gules, three martlets or winged vert which his descendants quartered with those of Danvers."

Vincent connects Richard of Epwell, son of John Danvers of Epwell, with Agnes the daughter of John de Brancestre, and, in his pedigree, figures on their shield:- three bendlets and three scallop-shells in chief of Danvers, impaling the three martlets on a bend of Brancestre.

The shield with three bendlets and three scallop-shells in chief is not the usual form of the Danvers shield and is not a shield the author is familiar with. So the problem concerning the coat of arms raised by Macnamara, who pointed out that the coat of arms of the Swithland Danvers family was that of John Danvers of Calthorpe, the son of Richard Danvers and Agnes Brancestre, and his wife Alice, is very difficult to disprove. Having said that the coat of arms on the Francis Danvers memorial brass plate, see page 100,

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

does have the supposed Brancestre shield but it is also quartered with that of the usual Danvers shield of gules a bend or and three mullets or, in the first quarter, from which we may assume that this was the shield that Francis used as his personal shield and not that of Brancestre. Where did that come from unless it was the usual form of the Shackerstone and Frolesworth family shield?

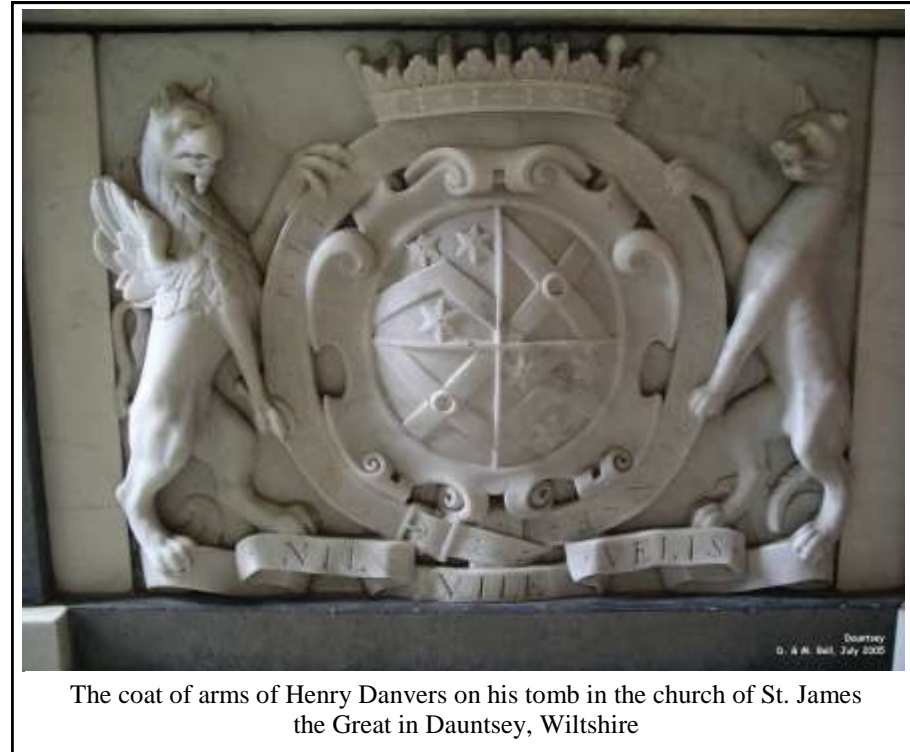
Interestingly the shield depicted on Francis Danvers' memorial plaque is different from a drawing of this shield illustrated in Nichols on page 1050, (see page 153) which is quartered without the usual form of the Danvers shield. Is it further proof of alteration that Charles Danvers was convinced had occurred? Sir Joseph Danvers also chose to use this form of the Danvers shield in his coat of arms as may be seen on his shield in Swithland Church impaled with that of the Babington shield, see page 105, on his portrait on page 39 and on the side of the Swithland Farm house on page 103 also on page 46 is a knight in the Armour and Surcoat of the Danvers family.

There are three other issues the author has found regarding different Danvers coats of arms which may or may not have a bearing on the Brancestre issue. Firstly we have the coat of arms of Knightley Danvers, see left, who married Alice Clarke, found on part of a fragment of his destroyed memorial in St. Cross Church Holywell. It is described as follows: *On the dexter side it is gules, a chevron between three mullets or, (Danvers). On the sinister side, it is or, a bend engrailed azure, (Clarke).* Knightley Danvers was a direct descendant of John Danvers and Alice



The Knightley Danvers Coat of Arms showing the traditional Danvers Shield on the left.

Verney but, as we can see, hasn't used the coat of arms described by Vincent and by Macnamara. It was earlier stated that the descendants of John Danvers and Alice Verney used the coat of arms described by Vincent quartered on their shield but this certainly hasn't happened here so why should it occur differently on Francis Danvers' memorial tablet?



The coat of arms of Henry Danvers on his tomb in the church of St. James the Great in Dauntsey, Wiltshire

Secondly another direct descendant of John Danvers and Alice Verney is Henry Danvers the Earl of Danby, see page 30, and as we can see from the photo above the coat of arms displayed on his tomb is that of the traditional Danvers quartered with the arms of his mother Elizabeth Neville. So again we have a descendant who is using the more usual form of the Danvers coat of arms. Yet in the same church his great, great, grandfather John Danvers who married Anne Stradling did use the Brancestre shield quartered with that of his wife Anne.

The third point of interest is that in "Burkes Extinct Baronetcies" Robert Davers or Danvers of Rougham is shown having the Brancestre Shield but as

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

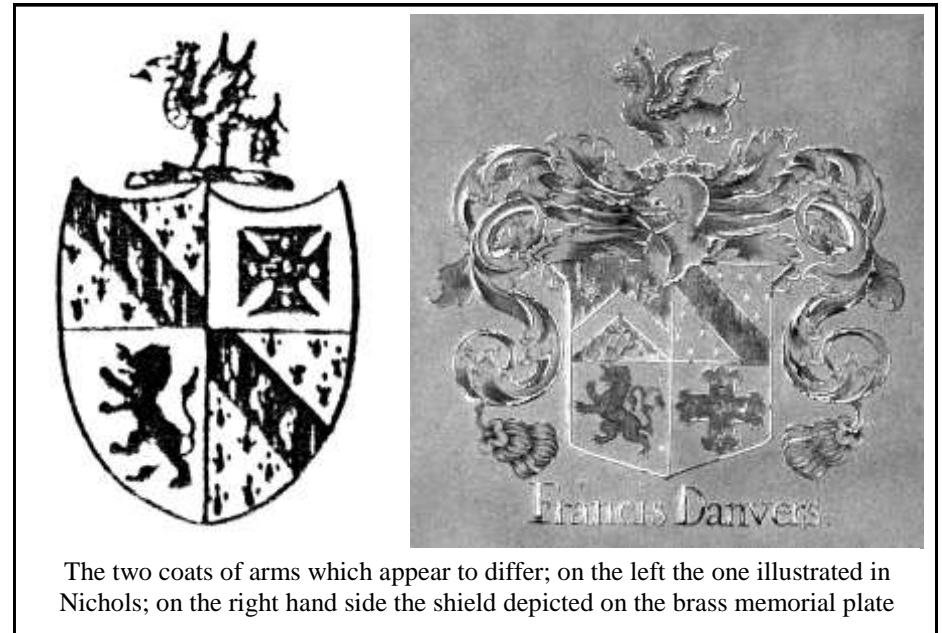
far as we are aware he has no connection with John Danvers and Alice Verney so why has he been assigned this coat of arms?

The first two issues were solved when the author came across the following written by John Aubrey, who was born in 1626. He mentions in his history of Wiltshire, the tomb of John Danvers, who married Anne Stradling, in St. James the Great, Dauntsey, in this manner:- *At the four corners of the plan of this tombe are these escutcheons in brasse 1st. Danvers (i.e. Branchester) quartering Barendes. 2nd. Stradling quartering Dauntsey. 3rd. Danvers (i.e. Branchester) and Barendes quarterly, impaling Stradling and Dauntsey quarterly. Finally 4th. The same as 3. The three popinjays (martlets) was the coate of Branchester. A Danvers married the daughter and heir and there-upon left off his own coate of arms (viz. Gules, a chevron between three mullets pierced Or); which was not reassumed till by old Sir John Danvers.*



Brass plate No. 3 on John Danvers tomb. Danvers (Brancestre) and Barendes quarterly impaling Stradling and Dauntsey quarterly

In the editor's notes at the bottom of the page is the following:- By "Old Sir John Danvers" Aubrey means, not the first of the name who married Anne Stradling and died 1514, but his grandson the Sir John Danvers, senior, who died 1594; called senior to distinguish him from one of his three sons, Charles, Henry Lord Danby and Sir John Danvers junior, the Regicide. In spite of an intense amount of research in trying to prove once and for all who the John Danvers was who married Margaret Walcote. We have unfortunately hit the proverbial brick wall. One of the researchers decided to contact the College of



The two coats of arms which appear to differ; on the left the one illustrated in Nichols; on the right hand side the shield depicted on the brass memorial plate

Arms in an attempt to see if they had any documents which might resolve this issue one way or another but on hearing that it would cost well in excess of £1,000 for them to do the research decided not to pursue the matter any further. So we are left with two possibilities; firstly that this John came from Shackerstone which is backed up by Nichols in the family tree prepared by Samson Bluemantle and Augustine Vincent in 1619, see page 2, and by the brass plaque on the side of John Danvers Baronet's tomb in Swithland Church; or secondly John was the son of John Danvers and Alice Verney based on the Brancestre coat of arms.

In spite of feeling a certain sense of frustration that this issue hasn't been resolved the author has come to the conclusion that in the grand scheme of things it doesn't really matter. The reason being that our researches have proved beyond doubt that the Danvers family didn't die out in Frolesworth with the death of Nicholas Danvers and it has given the descendants of Hugh Danvers a place in the history of the Danvers family which may otherwise have been overlooked.

Also if the link to John Danvers and Alice Verney is accurate then the Danvers family are linked to a much more prestigious lineage of the Danvers

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

family which can trace its descent directly from the Roland de Alvers who came over with William the Conqueror. It also proves the statement that Nichols made regarding the Danvers of Swithland being a younger branch of the family at Culworth, in Northamptonshire as they were also descendants of John and Alice.

But to cloud the issue Nichols also stated that the family was descended from one long seated at Frolesworth and Shackerstone, see page 151. If the Swithland Danvers did descend from John Danvers of Calthorpe then it is only right to give a brief outline of their ancestors.

For the reader's interest on the next page is an ancestral chart showing the ancestors of John Danvers of Calthorpe up to Ralph de Alvers, the son of Roland de Alvers who came over with William the Conqueror in 1066.

One final point regarding the Danvers coat of arms worth mentioning is to be seen in the coat of arms taken from Gary Danvers' centennial edition of the Memorials of the Danvers Family seen opposite. The arms are those of Sir John Danvers of Culworth, who married Anne Stradling in 1487, which are quartered as follows:-

1. Danvers. 2. Brancestre. 3. Verney. 4. Stradling. 5. Hawey. 6. Strongbow. 7. Gernon 8. Berkerolles 9. Turberville 10. Justyn 11. Barbe 12. Dauntsey. 13. Bavent. 14. Arundell 15. Carminow. 16. Lestecot. 17. Colshill. 18. Blanchminster. 19. Hiwis. 20. Danvers.

In the first two quarters are the same arms that are to be found on the brass memorial plaque to Francis Danvers in Swithland Church, see page 100, that of Danvers and Brancestre. Does this give us a further clue as to the origins of the Danvers family of Swithland?

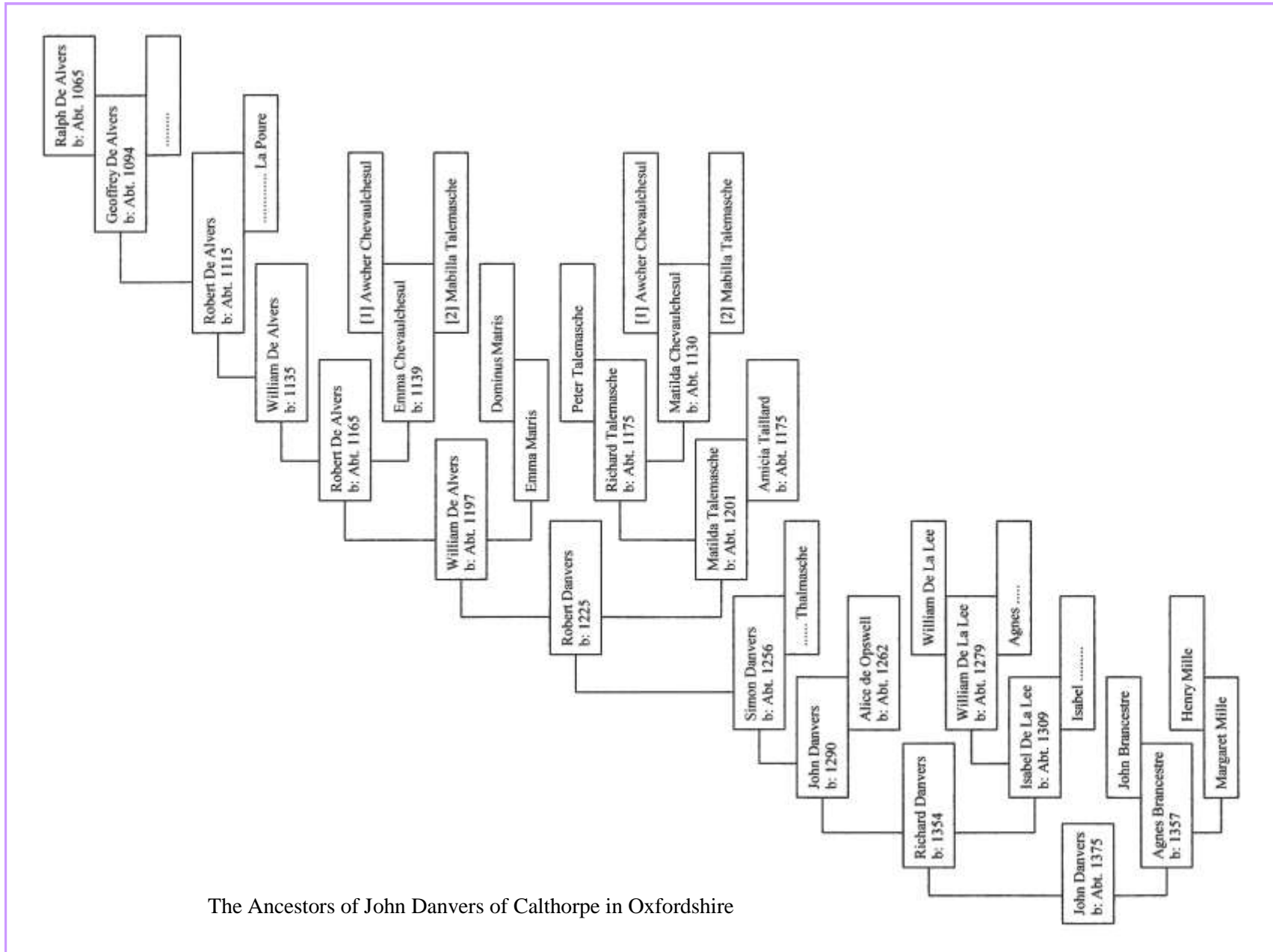
The issue regarding who were the ancestors of the Swithland branch of the Danvers family is one that we would like to pass on to anyone reading this book who like Macnamara before them, has a fondness for antiquarian research and also has the time to spend in trying to resolve this thorny issue.

In conclusion I would like to thank Judith Watts and Pat Davies; the researchers who have spent so much time, energy and money in producing such a vast amount of research material which has been invaluable in writing this book and I only hope that I have done justice to their combined valiant efforts.



The Coat of Arms of Sir John Danvers of Culworth

Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Glossary

- Advowson:** The right in English law of presenting a nominee to a vacant ecclesiastical benefice.
- Assart** A parcel of forested land cleared for use in agriculture.
- Assize:** A sitting of a legislative body or an edict issued by a court of assize to the sheriff for the recovery of property.
- Baronet** The title was created by James I of England in 1611 in order to raise funds, It could be bought on payment of £1080 and is hereditary
- Benefice:** Land granted to a priest in a church that has a source of income attached to it.
- Bordar:** A person ranking below villeins and above serfs in the social hierarchy of a manor, holding just enough land to feed a family (about 5 acres) and required to provide labour on the demesne on specified days of the week.
- Caracute:** Another name for a Hide: An area of land about 120 acres in size.
- Cottar:** A Cottar was one of the lowest peasant occupations, undertaken by the old or infirm, who had a series of low duties including swine-herd, prison guard and other menial tasks.
- Demesne:** In the feudal system, demesne was all the land, not necessarily all contiguous to the manor house, that was retained by a lord for his own use - as distinguished from land "alienated" or granted to others as freehold tenants.
- Enfeoffed:** Under the feudal system, enfeoffment was the deed by which a person was given land in exchange for a pledge of service. This mechanism was later used to avoid restrictions on the passage of title in land by a system in which a landowner would give land to one person for the use of another
- Fief: & Feoffment:** The fief (alternatively, fee, feoff, fiefdom), under the system of medieval European feudalism, often consisted of inheritable lands or revenue-producing property granted by a lord, generally to a vassal (who holds seisin), in return for a form of allegiance usually given by homage and fealty.
- Knight's fee:** In medieval England a knight's fee was the amount of money and / or military service a fief was required to pay to support one knight. This was approximately twelve hides or 1500 acres, although the term applies more to revenue a fief could generate than its size; it required about thirty marks per year to support a knight. It was also divided into smaller units down to one fifth in size.
- Manor:** A holding of land, with its own court and probably its own hall, but not necessarily having a manor house. The manor as a unit of land is generally held by a knight (knight's fee) or managed by a bailiff for some other holder.
- Message:** A dwelling house and the surrounding property, including gardens, courtyard, orchard and outbuildings. A capital message was that of the lord of a manor, or any other large residential property.
- Serf:** A semi-free peasant who works his lord's demesne and pays him certain dues in return for the use of land, the possession (not ownership) of which is heritable. These dues, are in the form of labor on the lord's land. Generally this averages up to three days a week. Generally subdivided into classes called: Cottagers, small holders, or villeins although the latter originally meant a free peasant who was burdened with additional rents and services.
- Seisin:** Also spelled seizin, is the possession of such an estate in land as was anciently thought worthy to be held by a free man. As ownership and possession of land was paramount in the Middle Ages, seisin approximates to modern "freehold" ownership of land, or the right to immediate possession.
- Tithe.** A tax of one tenth part of an annual produce or labour taken for the support of the clergy or the church..
- Villein:** The wealthiest class of peasant. They usually cultivated 20-40 acres of land, often in isolated strips
- Virgate:** Literally, one quarter of a "hide". Within the common fields of a particular manor virgates averaged about 30 acres. However, outside the common fields, where the quality of land could vary greatly, 'virgate' often came to indicate not a fixed amount of land but an amount of customary service attached to a piece of land.

A Danvers Family Wedding at Shepshed



The wedding of John Henry Danvers and Annie Lester on the 24th of May 1904. The following guests were identified by Florence Ann Freeman Danvers number 14 in the picture.
1. Arthur Danvers. 2. William Kerry with his mother - 3. Elizabeth Kerry (nee Danvers). 4. Ernest Danvers. 5. Charles Danvers. 6. Emma Danvers. 7. John Henry Danvers.
8. Annie Lester and her parents. 9. William Lester. & 10. Ann Lester. 11. William Danvers. 12. Maria Danvers nee Freeman. 13. Charles Freeman Danvers.

Memorials of the Swithland and Shepshed Danvers Families

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Addendum to the Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

New information regarding the Coat of Arms of Francis Danvers

Since this book was published fresh evidence has been found which may shed a new light on the perplexing issue of the coat of arms that is to be seen on the brass memorial to Francis Danvers in Swithland church, see page 100. It was this coat of arms that led Macnamara to suggest that John Danvers, who married Margaret Walcote, was the son of John Danvers and Alice Verney of Calthorpe. The reason being that they contained the Brancestre coat of arms, which was adopted as the Danvers coat of arms by Richard Danvers who married Agnes Brancestre.

As I mentioned before on page 151 in the book this allegation was not easy to disprove, however by pure chance Ronald Danvers, who lives in Canada and one of the purchasers of my book, wrote to me and asked if it would be possible to see if I could find a common ancestor between his lineage and mine. After some time I managed to discover that Ronald and I shared the same 13x great grandfather - William Danvers born in 1428 who married Anne Pury, see the descendant tree opposite.

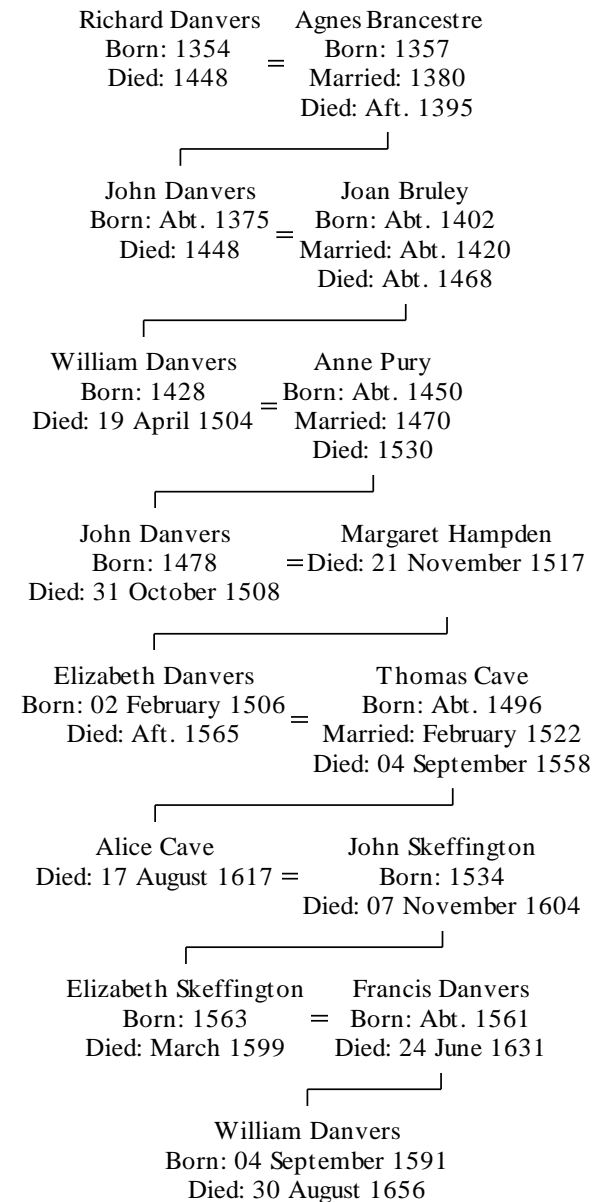
I emailed both of our common family trees to Ronald and then forgot about it. A short time later I realised that William Danvers and Anne Pury rang a rather important bell in my memory. I decided to follow the ancestral line of William Danvers and found that his grandfather was the Richard Danvers who married Agnes Brancestre which meant of course that there was an indirect link to the Danvers family of Swithland.

The link is through Elizabeth Skeffington, the wife of Francis Danvers, who is directly descended from both William Danvers and also his son John Danvers both of whom could possibly have borne the Brancestre coat of arms. It is surely not too much to suggest that Elizabeth would have brought the Brancestre arms into the Swithland family in the same way that they are to be seen in the coat of arms of Sir John Danvers of Culworth on page 154.

This Sir John Danvers is the great grandson of Richard Danvers and Agnes Brancestre and like Francis Danvers of Swithland has both the Danvers and Brancestre coat of arms on his family shield. Whilst nothing is completely certain in the field of heraldry I would like to think that this is reasonable evidence, however tenuous, for the Brancestre coat of arms to be found on Francis Danvers' coat of arms without it necessarily coming from the Calthorpe family.

It would also tend to support our own research that the Danvers family of Swithland did indeed have its roots in Shackerstone and Frolesworth.

Direct Descendants of Richard Danvers

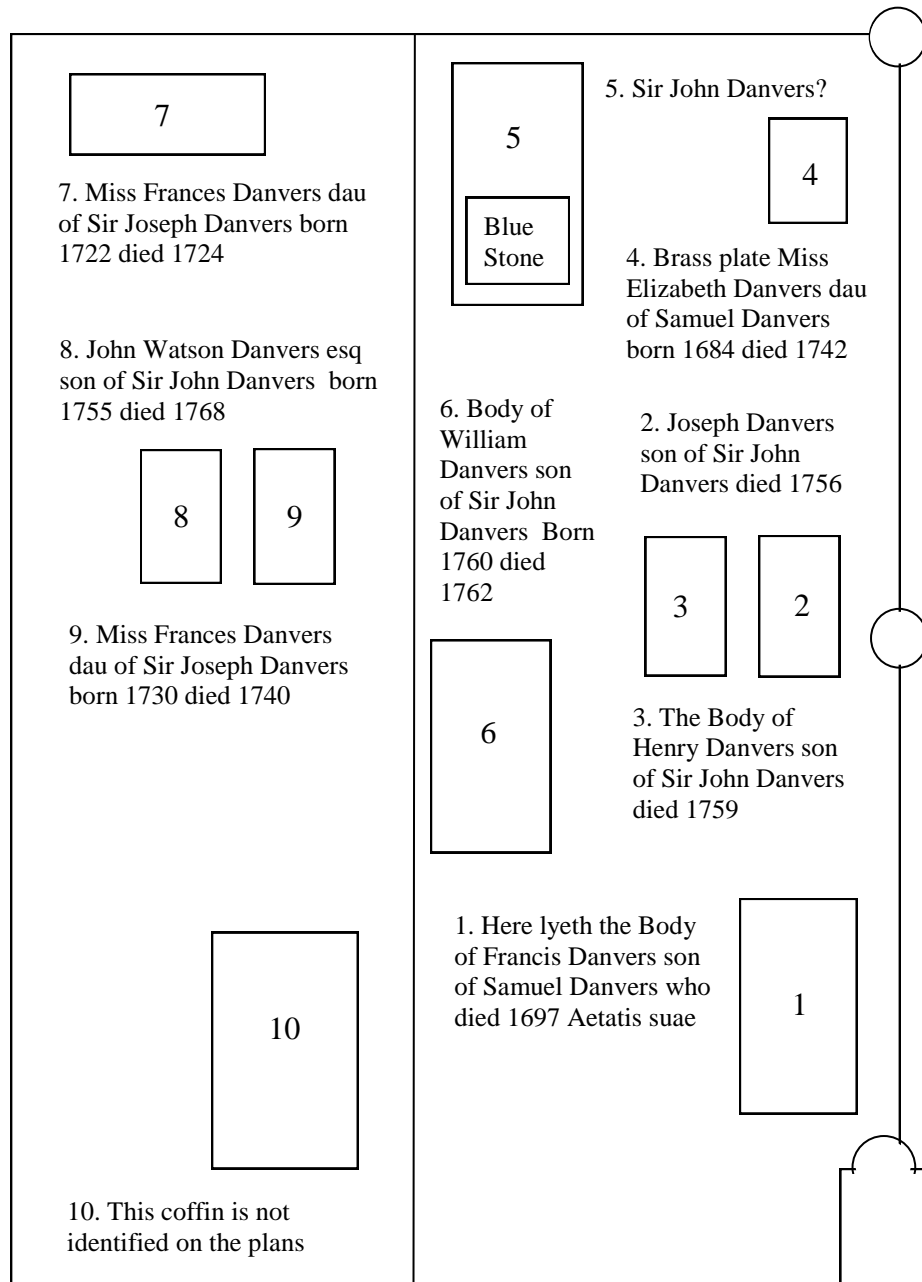


Addendum to the Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families



Photograph of a drawing of the proposed alterations to the Danvers Chapel in Swithland Church taken in August 2012.

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Stylised copy of the 1925 plan of the coffins in the vault at Swithland Church.

New evidence that has recently come to light regarding the Coffins that were buried in a vault under the South Aisle of St Leonard's Church, Swithland

My aunt, Florence Willson (nee Danvers), told me many years ago that her uncle, Charles William Danvers, had been searching for a crypt at Swithland Church in an attempt to try to find the body of the child that had supposedly been murdered and replaced by a glass cutter's son (see page 94).

I mentioned this to one of the researchers and in 1998 she wrote to the rector, Ann Horton, asking whether or not there was indeed a crypt or vault in Swithland Church. The rector passed the letter to local historian Bob Osborne who replied that to his knowledge no crypt existed in Swithland church; I quote:-

"As far as I am aware, there is no crypt in Swithland church. I have seen architect's drawings of the church for its restoration in 1928. The floor was refurbished at that time with oak blocks. There is no reference in the drawings to a crypt, and no-one here has any knowledge of one."

In 2012 the rector had plans drawn up to totally change the floor plan in the South aisle (the Danvers Chapel, see page 160) and to enable this to be carried out a hole was drilled into the aisle floor and a camera put in to help ascertain what might be under the floor. They discovered the coffins of five people - the Countess of Lanesborough, the 5th Earl of Lanesborough, John Watson Danvers, William Danvers and Sir John Danvers. Thus vindicating my aunt's original statement.

However whilst plans to lower the aisle floor were taking place sketches came to light, which had been made by the builders when they had lowered the floor in 1925 and exposed the contents of the vault, showing the positions of the various coffins they had found. The rector sent me a copy of these plans which I have simplified and redrawn in the column alongside as the original sketches are difficult to read.

It certainly indicates that several of the coffins had been removed, which Charles Danvers had mentioned in his notes (see page 103), when compared to the later plan, to be seen on the next page, that was drawn when the floor of the aisle was lowered to its present level in 2012. Unfortunately there is no indication of the orientation of the plans but if I assume that coffin number 5 indicated as being under the blue stone is that of Sir John Danvers (not indicated on the original sketches), then he would have been buried under his memorial tablet which was originally on the West wall of the Danvers Chapel prior to its removal onto the North wall when the West wall was removed.

Addendum to the Memorials of the Swithland & Shepshed Danvers Families

If this assumption is accurate then this would indicate that the top of the first plan is facing West. If one then compares the plan opposite with the plan of the South aisle on the previous page it would appear that coffin number 10 could be the coffin of the 5th Earl of Lanesborough.

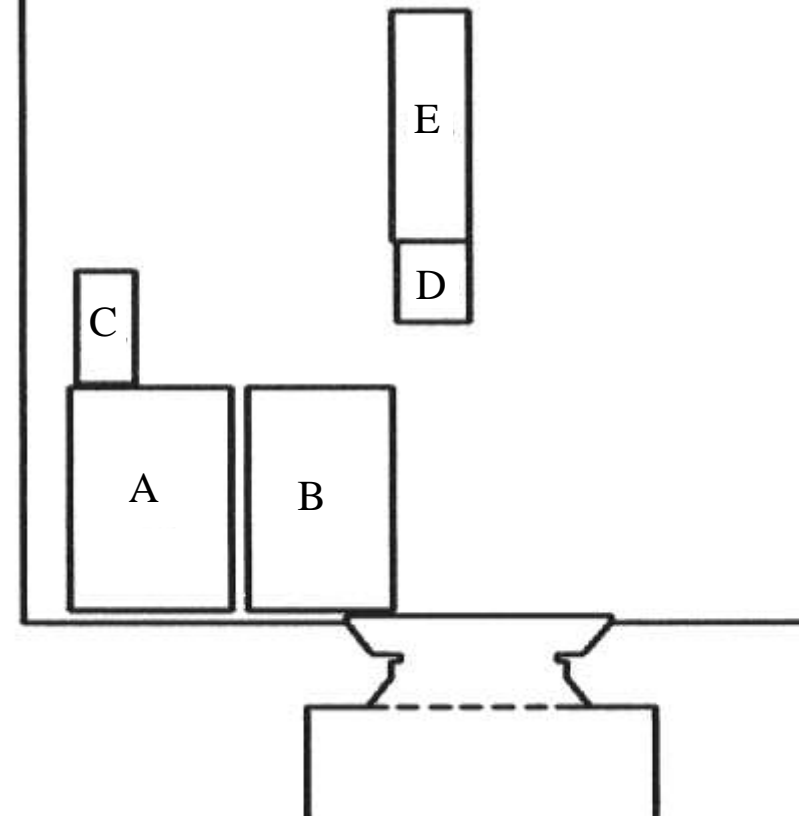
So in spite of all the efforts that Charles William Danvers made to try to preserve the Danvers vault and its contents it would appear that they were all in vain. When the two plans are compared side by side there seems to be no doubt that certain coffins have been removed, notably those of the Danvers family.



On May the 23rd 2015 the Danvers family once again made its mark on the registers of Swithland Church when our son John Danvers married his fiancée Josie Fuller on Saturday May 23rd 2015 in what was the most perfect wedding ceremony and later the wonderful reception at the Griffin Inn. So finally after over 200 years the family name of Danvers has been linked to the Church of St. Leonard's in Swithland once more.

Plan of the Coffins in the vault under the South Aisle of St. Leonards Church August 2012

- A. Countess of Lanesborough died 1870
- B. 5th Earl of Lanesborough (1794 - 1866)
- C. John Watson Danvers died 1769
- D. William Danvers died 1762
- E. Sir John Danvers (1723 - 1796)



Back page:- The wedding of John Henry Danvers and Annie Lester on the 24th of May 1904.
See page 157 for key to photograph.

