

CHAPTER III

THE SWYNNERTON ANCESTORS OF THE PARSHALL FAMILY

ACCORDING to the Domesday Book,¹ the fee of Sulvertone (the old spelling of Swynnerton) was held of Robert de Stafford by one Aslen or Aelen,² a nobleman from Brittany, who it appears was related to his overlord, Robert (de Toesney) de Stafford. This Aelen, the Norman tenant of Swynnerton in 1086, had an elder son Aelen fitz-Aelen, who died without issue,³ his estates passing into the hands of his brother Robert fitz-Aelen in 1122. The son of the latter, Robert fitz-Eelen, is referred to as Lord of Swynnerton in a certificate of Helias, Archdeacon of Stafford, concerning the concession of the Church of Swynnerton to the Priory of Stone in 1158.⁴ Robert de Swynnerton, son of the latter, is witness to a deed in 1190, and is found in litigation over the raising of a pool in Swynnerton in 1199.⁵ His son, Robert, who was the first to style himself de Swynnerton, evidently took part with the Barons in the wars against

¹ *Swynnerton*: Domesday, Sulvertone; 1205, Selverton; 1206, Soulverton; thirteenth century, Swinnerton, frequently Swinaferton, Swyneforton; fourteenth century, Swineforton; fifteenth century, Swynerton. The Domesday and earlier forms are unquestionably Anglo-Saxon—*seolfor* (Middle English, seifer, seiver, sulver and suelfer) = Silver, and *-ton* = Silvertown [from *Notes on Staffordshire Place Names*, by W. H. Duigan, 1902].

² *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, vol. vii. Old Series, pt. ii.

³ *Ibid.*, 1900, vol. iii. New Series, pp. 74-108, 112-120.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. iii. Old Series, p. 185.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. iii. Old Series, p. 56; see also vol. iii. New Series, p. 112.

King John, as, in November 1217, the Sheriff of Lincolnshire is ordered to restore certain lands of Robert de Swynnerton, who had returned to his allegiance to the King.¹ This last Robert de Swynnerton seems to have died about 1224,² and in January 1225, his widow, Mabel, was suing her son Robert *in banco* for her dower.³ The latter died without issue, and was succeeded by his sister Margery, who later married her cousin,⁴ John de Swynnerton of Parva Sugnall, grandson of the Robert of 1190.

This John de Swynnerton is the one referred to in the introduction on p. 17. He married three times: first, Argena de Knighton,⁵ by whom he had no issue; secondly, Eleanor de Peshale,⁶ the heiress of the earlier Peshale family, by whom he had Richard, the ancestor of the later Peshales, Pershalls and Parshalls, and three other sons—Robert, Stephen, and John; and thirdly, Margery, the Swynnerton heiress.

While this John de Swynnerton was Lord of Peshale by right of his marriage with Eleanor, it appears that he also acquired land there by purchase, as Chetwynd, the Staffordshire historian, says that 'the whole of Peshall, together with the Royalty, was later purchased by Sir John Swinnerton, Kt., of Robert ye son of Stephen de Peshall, who sold him all his own lands there and all he had purchased of Thomas, ye son of Thomas Peshall aforementioned, together with all rents, homages, etc., all which were by Sir John given to Richard his younger son, who, seating himself here, assumed

¹ Shaw's *Staffordshire*, vol. i. p. 15.

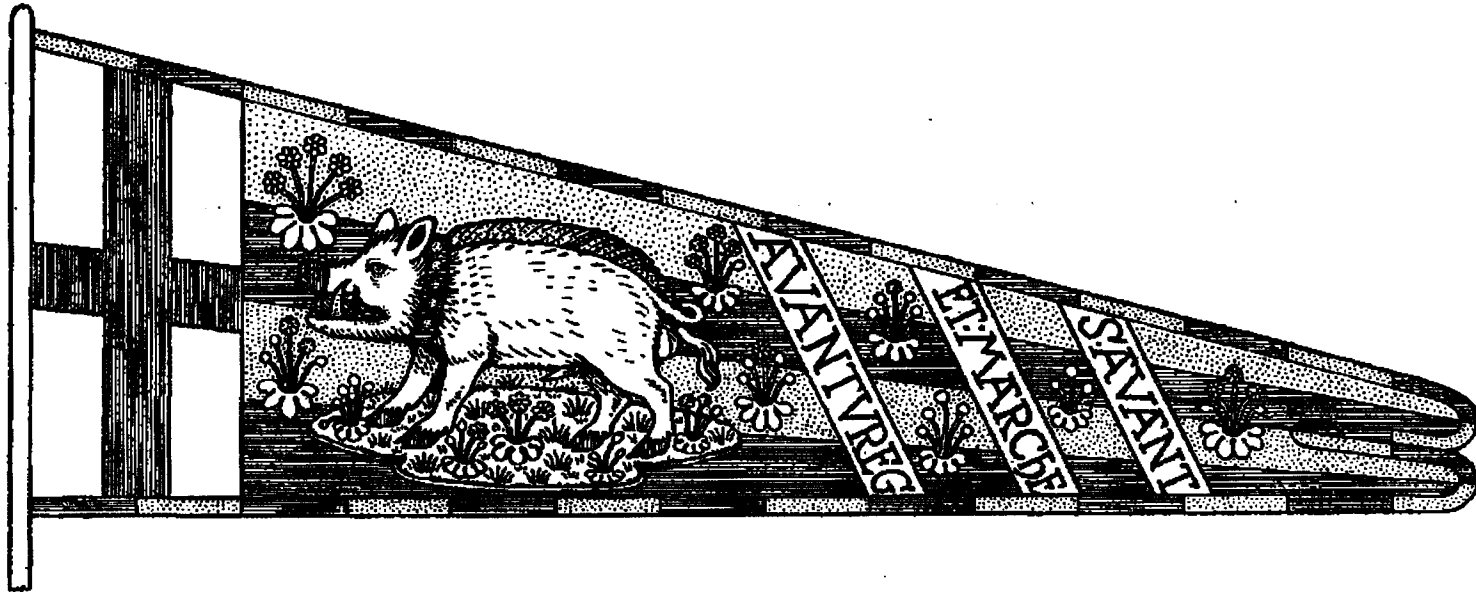
² In vol. iii., *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, New Series, it is shown that this Robert de Swynnerton probably accompanied Richard I. to Cyprus and Palestine with Robert de Stafford, his overlord, during the Crusade of 1192, and it is said that the Swynnerton motto, 'Avaunturez et marchez avaunt' [Risk all and march ahead], was conferred on him for valour in engaging and overcoming in single combat a Saracen champion.

³ *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, vol. iii. Old Series, p. 231; vol. iv. p. 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. iii. New Series, p. 76.

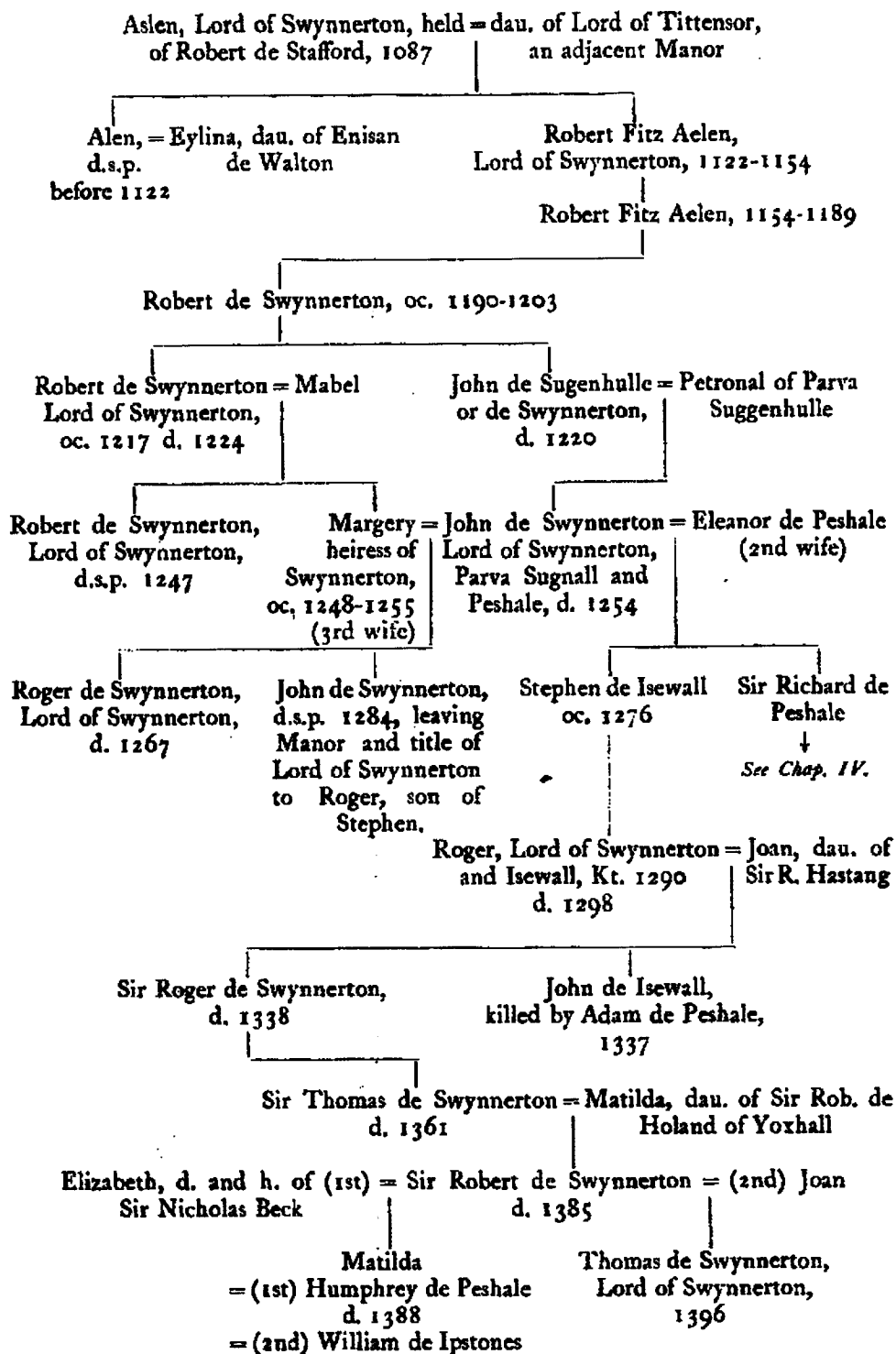
⁵ Bodleian Library, *Rawlinson, B.*, 144, p. 149 (Pedigree by Dugdale).

⁶ Burke's *Royal Descents* contains a pedigree of the Peshalls, in which Eleanor is given as the sister and heiress of Robert, the son of Stephen de Peshale in Eccleshall.



A SWYNNERTON STANDARD.

THE SWYNNERTON ANCESTORS OF THE PARSHALL FAMILY



ye name of Peshall, and was progenitor of ye family, which in succeeding ages arose to very great eminence and esteem in this and neighbouring counties.'¹ Erdeswick in 1600 gives the actual deed thus: 'Ego Robertus, filius Stephani de Peshall, dedi d'no Johanni de Swinnerton Totam Terram Meam in Peshall, cum domibus, redditibus, servitiis, homagiis, wardis, releviis et escheatis, et totam terram quam emi de Thoma filio Thomae de Peshall.'²

Of John de Swynnerton's three other sons by Eleanor, no one of them adopted the surname of Peshale. The eldest, John, was given his father's original manor of Parva Sugnull,³ and was known as John de Suggenhull. He died, however, early, without issue, in 1248, and Parva Sugnull went to his brother, Robert, who was killed in 1272. The remaining son, Stephen, was known as Stephen de Usewall, and his son, Stephen de Usewall, succeeded to the Manor and Lordship of Swynnerton in 1284, as explained below.

John de Swynnerton appears as a witness to deeds, in conjunction with Robert de Swynnerton, previous to his marriage with the heiress, Margery,⁴ and in 1247 'John de Swynnerton and Margery his wife,' are complainants in a suit with respect to common of pasture in Swynnerton.⁵ He very probably took part in one of the Crusades, and may have joined Henry III. on his expedition to France in 1230. His eldest son by Margery, Roger de Swynnerton, died without issue, the estates and title as Lord of Swynnerton passing to John, his brother. This John de Swynnerton

¹ Walter Chetwynd's Manuscript *History of Pyrehill Hundred*, 1679 (Salt Library).

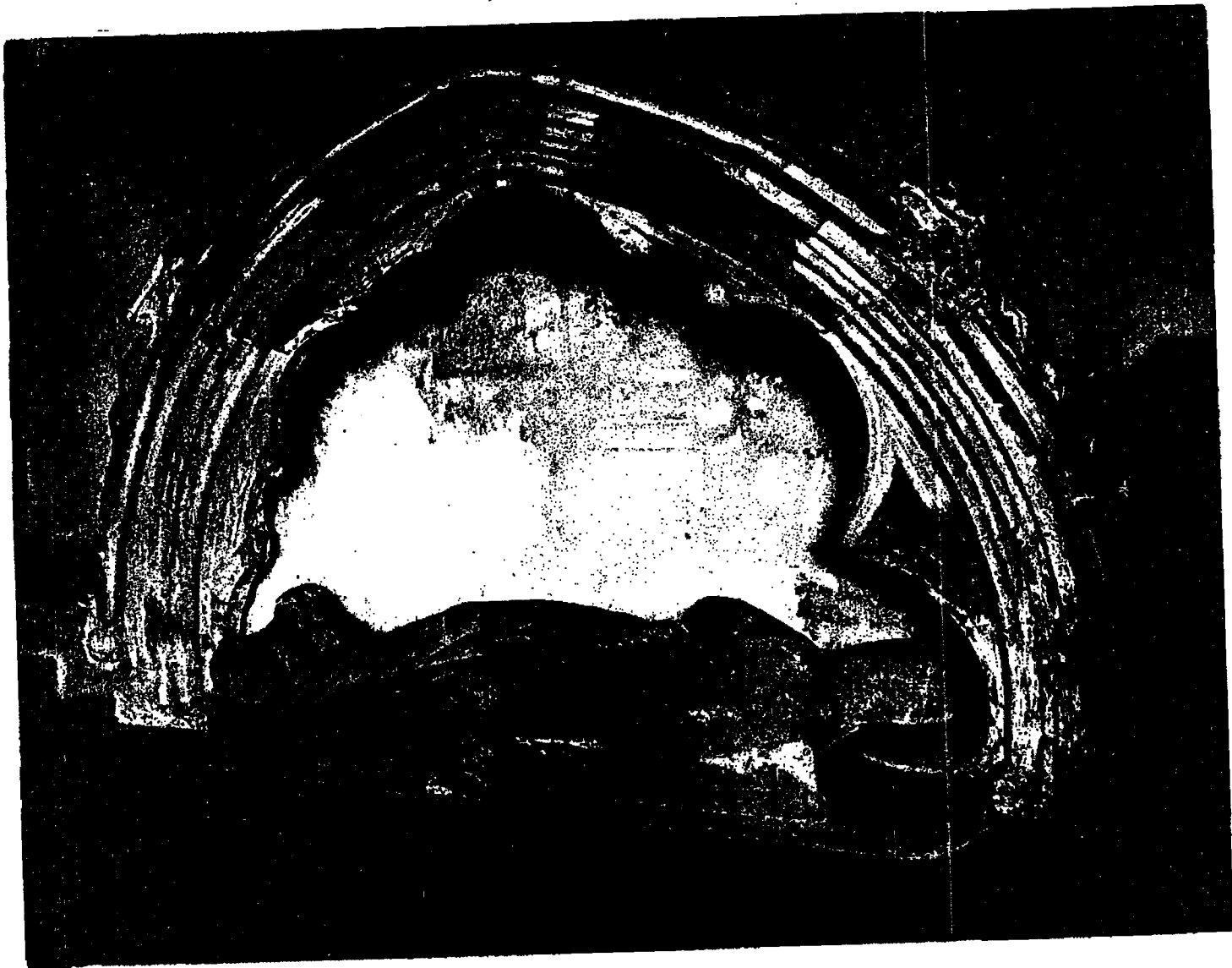
² Sampson Erdeswick's Manuscript *View of Staffordshire* (Harl. MSS., No. 990).

Translation: 'I, Robert, son of Stephen de Peshale, have given to John de Swinnerton all my land in Peshall, together with all houses, rents, servants, homages, wardships, taxes, etc., and all the land which I bought of Thomas, son of Thomas de Peshall.'

³ In 21 Ed. I., John de Parva Suggenhull held Little Suggenhull of ye Bishop by service of a Knight's fee. It came afterwards to ye Peshalls' [Chetwynd, 1679].

⁴ *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, vol. vii. Old Series, pt. ii. p. 8.

Ibid., vol. iv. Old Series, pt. i. p. 243.



EFFIGY OF JOHN DE SWYNNERTON IN SWYNNERTON CHURCH

also died without issue, but made a settlement by which Roger, son of Stephen de Usewell or Isewall, grandson of the above John and Eleanor, became his heir in tail, and ancestor of the future Lords of Swynnerton.¹ This Roger then took the name of Roger de Swynnerton, and, at his death in 1298, left his estates to his two sons, Roger and John. John, who was known as John de Isewall,² was killed by Adam de Peshale in 1337, as related in the next chapter. Roger, known as Sir Roger de Swynnerton, was for a time Constable of the Tower of London. He died in 1338, leaving issue Sir Roger, who died without issue, and Sir Thomas, who left a son, Robert.

The last named, Sir Robert de Swynnerton, succeeded his father in 1361 as Lord of Swynnerton. He was twice married. By his first wife, Elizabeth, daughter and sole heiress of Sir Nicholas Beck, Kt., Lord of Tene and Hopton, in the county of Stafford, he had an only daughter, Matilda, who succeeded to her mother's inheritance, consisting of the Manors of Hopton and Tene, and other lands in Staffordshire. This Elizabeth died before 1374, when Sir Robert married a second wife, Joan, and had a son, Thomas. Matilda, the daughter of Sir Robert by his first wife, was married first to Humphrey de Peshale, as related in Chapter VI. His son, Thomas, by his second wife, became Lord of Swynnerton on his father's death in 1396, and was the ancestor of the present Swynnertons.³

John de Swynnerton, Richard de Peshale's father, died in 1254, and a fine old stone effigy of the recumbent figure of a cross-legged knight lying in a niche on the south side of the chancel of Swynnerton Church marks his tomb. It is fairly certain that this John de Swynnerton rebuilt the church in the early English Gothic style as it stands to-day,

¹ *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, vol. vii. Old Series, pt. ii. p. 14.

² This was before the time of fixed surnames and many Swynnertons went under the names of de Isewall, de Sugnall, de Peshale, etc.

³ *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, vol. vii. Old Series, pt. ii.

and this would have entitled him to interment in the chancel. The effigy was probably erected by his wife, Margery, who survived him.¹

A reproduction from a photograph of this effigy as it stands to-day is given on page 60. The sculptured figure measures 6 ft. 2 in. from head to foot, and is clothed in complete mail. Beneath it is a chamber, which was opened by accident during the restoration of the church in 1856, and was found to contain the body lying exactly under the stone figure, and corresponding with it in length, viz., 6 ft. 2 in. Portions of the knight's weapons were found within, comprising what appeared to have been a lance-head and other fragments of iron much corroded. The corpse had been wrapt in lead a quarter of an inch thick, made to fit close to the form, but it was burst open. There appeared to have been a coffin of wood outside the lead, but this was reduced to a powder. The skeleton was very perfect. All the teeth were sound and firmly fixed in the jaws, excepting two in the front, which were missing, possibly driven in by a lance thrust. The bones were still clothed with flesh as in life, but it fell to dust soon after exposure to the air. The beard was in perfect preservation and of a reddish brown. The masonry was at once restored after the remains had been inspected, but in view of the picture called to the imagination, the accident can scarcely be regretted.

The Swynnerton ancestors of the Peshales, Pershalls and Parshalls end therefore with John de Swynnerton, Lord of Swynnerton in the right of his wife Margery, and father by Eleanor de Peshale of Richard. On Richard's marriage in about 1250 his father gave him the lands and manor of Peshale which had passed to him by his marriage with Eleanor, and, in consequence, Richard assumed the surname of de Peshale, and took as his arms the insignia of Swynnerton, the Cross fleury, combined with an escutcheon of the arms of the old Corbeil family, viz., a lion salient.

¹ *Staff. Hist. Coll.*, vol. iii. New Series, p. 119.



ARMS AND CREST OF SWYNNERTON

