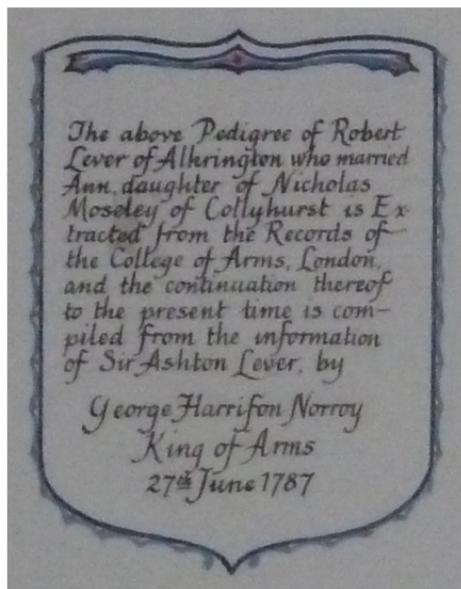


THE FAMILY TREE

This may seem very boring and unnecessary but without the family tree this book would not exist. So bear with this longish chapter and details.

The family tree, that came into my possession many years ago, dates back to the time of the Norman Conquest. Henry, Lord of Laever came over with that invasion and whose family from the year 1100 became lords of the manor for a large part of Lancashire and lords of the soil and original founders of the towns of Great Lever, Little Lever, Darcy Lever, Ashton-under-Lyne, Prestwich and Middleton.

The copy on my wall is titled: The Pedigree of Sir Ashton Lever of Alkington in the County Palatine of Lancaster and thus of George Harold Simpson of Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada.



Click on this shield to download a **large** photo of the family tree (4.4 MB). You can blow it up and examine the details.

On the left side near the top of the document is this shield with the words:

“The above Pedigree of Robert Lever of Alkrington who married Ann daughter of Nicholas Moseley of Collyhurst is extracted from the records of the College of Arms, London and the continuation thereof to the present time is compiled from the information of Sir Ashton Lever by George Harrison Norvy.”

On the opposite side is a shield with the family coat of arms and further down is another shield with these words: “The continuation from Sir Ashton Lever to the present time is compiled and added from Family Records by me (signed) Katherine-Ashton Simpson, 17 October 1905.”



Beyond that are names from Simpson records. The words at the top “and thus of George Harold Simpson of Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada” were added to the original document by Margaret.

The first name on the document is “Lefingus de Laever”. Several lines down, the names indicate in which King’s reign the

ancestor lived, starting with Edward the First. His reign began in the late 1200's.

The surname of LEVER was a French-Norman name that was of two-fold origin. The name, which was originally of Norman origin, was brought into England in the wake of the Norman Invasion of 1066, and was a metonymic occupational name for someone who hunted hares.

The name has numerous variant spellings that include LEAVER, LIEVRE, LELIEVRE, and LIEVERS. French, or rather Norman French, was the language of the aristocracy and the upper classes in England at the time fixed surnames were being developed. It is therefore not surprising that many of our well-known family names are derived from French words. Originally only Christian or personal names were used, and although a few came into being during the 10th century, surnames were not widely used until much later, when people began to realize the prestige of having a second name.

Often only the dates of death are listed and not birth dates. Very odd!

The following comes from an article by W.J. Smith titled *Alkrington Hall and The Lever Family*. I have been unable to find when it was written nor to whom it was delivered. It is included at this particular point because it includes considerable detail about the family.

Robert and John Lever were the younger sons of Robert Lever who died in 1620. This Robert was a clothier of Manchester who had married Catherine Crompton of Worth. He was very successful in business, although some of his business was evidently carried on in a dubious fashion for in 1606 he was convicted of "barratry", i.e.: of vexatious litigation, and was fined a sum of £334 and very narrowly escaped being placed in the

pillory. His success in business is well illustrated in the lands and estates he purchased before he died.

The extended account of W.J. Smith indicates that Robert was murdered in 1699.

It was common practice in the early seventeenth century for merchants to invest their profits in land. And in acquiring land, the merchants achieved rank and power, much to the discomfort of the old nobility who were soon succeeded by rich traders and merchants who in a generation became themselves absorbed into the squirearchy.

Robert Lever in 1601 bought from a Mr. Chisnall a moiety (i.e.: a half) of some lands in Darcy Lever, and by 1620 he acquired the following properties that are listed in his will. Land in Heaton Fallowfield; Strangeways; a house and land in Market Stead Lane, Manchester; another house in Manchester; land in Heath Charnock and Walton-le-dale; and the manor of Rivington. Of these properties he left the house in Market Stead Lane and half of the Heaton property to his son John Lever, and the richer plum of Rivington, with the lands in Heath Charnock and Walton-le-dale to his favourite son Robert. The remainder of his estate went to his other children.

It appears that Robert and John carried on their father's business, Robert acting as agent in London while John saw to the manufacture of cloth, possibly wool cloth and fustian, which was made in the homes of cottagers living in and around Manchester. Their business also prospered, and Robert bought some land in Alkrington prior to 1622 in which year he was taxed 6s on the same. Five years later, together with his brother and partner John, he bought the whole of the manor and township of Alkrington from Thomas Legh, a member of the family of Cheshire.

Robert spent most his time in London and it is doubtful whether he ever resided in the hall at Alkington although his initials together with those of his brother John, are to be seen on Lever Bridge, together with the date, 1636. Sometime between this date and his death, the property was made over wholly to John as there is no mention of Alkington in Robert's Will, made in March 1642. In June 1631, both Robert and John paid the fines levied for refusing knighthood. Robert paid £10, and John paid £ 12,10 shillings.

John Lever married Katherine Warburton and they had four sons and three daughters. Unfortunately two sons and one daughter died in infancy, but the eldest son, Robert succeeded his father on the latter's death in 1645. At his father's death, Robert was 22, and he was to live at Alkington for the next 6 years. He either repaired or rebuilt the Lever Bridge, for there is a date stone on the upstream side of the bridge with his coat of arms, the date 1652 and his initials R.L. carved on it. (See page 2 of Alkington Hall)

In 1681 the possessions of Robert Lever are listed. They included the Manor and township of Alkington, a water mill in Alkington, Gordon Hall and an estate there called Catsknoll, and lands in the townships of Tonge, Middleton, Prestwick, Bamford, Heat Heaton Fallowfield, Harwood, Grindlow, Chorlton Rowe, Gorton and Chatterton, besides the lands in Manchester, previously mentioned. In 1697 he also possessed land in Burdsell and Castleton.

Robert Lever was succeeded by his only surviving son, John, who married Frances Foley of Prestwood. They had three sons and three daughters. Their eldest son, Darcy, who succeeded on his father's death in 1718 was born in 1705, educated at Brazenose College, and was made a Doctor of Civil Law in July 1733. (See page 2 of Alkington Hall)

Darcy's three sons predeceased him; he died unmarried and thus ended the Lever family in the male line.

The Simpsons come into the Lever descendency through the above Darcy Lever's granddaughter, Elizabeth and her marriage to my great grandfather, the Reverend Michael Henry Simpson.