

SWYNNERTON - The Reverend CHARLES MA. FSA.CS.15

Charles Swynnerton was born on 27.11.1843 in the Isle of Man and was the second son of Charles Swynnerton, a stonemason who had moved from Liverpool to settle on the island, and Mary, the daughter of Robert Callister of Castletown, known in the family as the 'short Manx woman'.

Sometime between 1878 and 1882, the Reverend Charles and one of his brothers restored the family surname to Swynnerton which had been the common spelling from circa 1100 to 1633. The other brothers did not change and continued with the rendering used by the rest of the family.

Charles was educated at St. John's School, Hurstpierpoint; University College, London (1866) and Oxford (1870). He was ordained in 1868 and elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1889. With three of his brothers he was a Founder Member of the William Salt Archaeological Society, Stafford in 1879. He was Headmaster of Ramsey Grammar School, Isle of Man and Curate of St. Olave's, Lazayre from 1868 until 1873 when he went to Ceylon as a Government Chaplain where he served until 1877.



On 23.11.1874 in Delhi, he married Maud, daughter of Major Henry William Massy of Grantstown, Tipperary. Only two of their children survived the rigours of the Indian sub-continent, Francis Massy (1877-1938) and Gertrude Mary Massy ('Maud') (1882-1935). His first wife died on 11.11.1882 at Mussoorie in India. Later in life, on 23.10.1909 he married Edith, daughter of the Rev. T. Aiken-Sneath of Woodchester Lawn, near Stroud, Glos.

After Ceylon, the Rev. Charles joined the Indian Establishment from 1877-1901. He is recorded as being a Chaplain on the Bengal Establishment (1884) and, later, a Senior Chaplain to the Indian Govt. He saw active service with the Kabul Expeditionary Force (1878-9), the Hazara Field Force (1881) and the Black Mountain Expedition (1894-5).

The Rev. Charles devoted much of his time in India to collecting from original sources a large number of folk tales from the Upper Indus and these were published as 'The Adventures of the Panjab Hero Raja Rasalu' (1884), 'Indian Nights Entertainment' (1892) and 'Romantic Tales from the Punjab' (1903). At that time he was a member of the Royal Asiatic and Folk-Lore Societies and of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Amongst his other publications whilst in India were 'The Afghan War' and 'Gough's Action at Futtahabad', both prior to 1884 and 'A History of the Angelo Family' which was published in 'The Ancestor' (Volume VII). He also wrote a considerable amount of verse, published under a single cover in 1925 as 'A Medley of Occasional Verse, Grave and Gay'. Eight of these were subsequently reproduced in the County Series of Contemporary Poetry (VII Gloucester) in 1927.

He undoubtedly started his researches into the family history at an early stage and before he went East. In May 1888, from India, he wrote the introduction to the Hon. & Rev. Conon Bridgman's 'Account of the Family of Swynnerton of Swynnerton and Elsewhere in the County of Stafford'. Amongst his writings on the family were 'The First Two Generations of the Swynnertons of Co. Stafford 1086 - 1122', 'The Earlier Swynnertons of Eccleshall', 'Swynnerton of Chell, Co. Stafford', 'On the Cross-legged Effigy in Swynnerton Church', 'Two Ancient Petitions from the Record Office', 'Notes on the Family of Swynnerton (Concerning the Presumed Wife of Roger de Swynnerton, the Baron)' and 'On some Forgotten Swynnertons of the Fourteenth Century'.

After leaving India in 1901, the Rev. Charles held numerous chaplaincies in Italy, Egypt and Cyprus before becoming Vicar of Leonard Stanley in Gloucestershire from 1912-1920 during which years he devoted himself to the restoration of the church. Two publications of his at that time were - "Stanley St. Leonard" and "Some Early Selwyns". He was active up to the time of his death in 1928, his 85th year, when he had in train the re-publication of his "Romantic Tales of the Punjab" in three volumes the first of which was printed before his death, but the publication of the remaining volumes then lapsed.

He died on the 16th November 1928 and was buried at Minchinhampton, Glos.

SWYNNERTON – Major General CHARLES ROGER ALAN CB. DSO.

CS.19

Charles Swynnerton was born in Simla, North India on the 12th. February 1901, the second son of Frederick Swynnerton, Artist and Louise Angelo. He was commissioned into the North Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's) in 1920. He joined the 1st. Battalion on the Curragh and accompanied it to Gibraltar, Eastern Thrace and Turkey, and Secunderabad in India. Then followed two years in Sierra Leone where for a time (in 1926) he was also appointed an Inspector of Police by the Governor.



In 1926 he married Clares Ines Stevenson, and they had two sons, Jeremy Charles Angelo and Timothy Frederick.

From 1926 until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 he served with his regiment in Lichfield, Ballykinler and Gibraltar. He attended Staff College in 1933 followed by tours on the Staff in Malta, Palestine and Transjordan, York and the War Office where he was serving at the outbreak of war. After a brief spell with his Regiment in Aldershot he was sent in 1940 on promotion to a Staff post in Nigeria where two divisions were being raised and trained for service in Burma. In 1942 he commanded a battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment for a short time followed by command of the 6th. Bn. The North Staffordshire Regiment in 1942/3. His main service, however, was to be once again with the West African Frontier Force. In September 1943 he assumed command of the 1st. (West African) Infantry Brigade which he organised and trained in Nigeria. He took the Brigade to Burma in 1944 as part of the 82nd West African Division and led it throughout the Arakan campaign until the end of the war. There were few roads and most supplies, stores and equipment had to be transported by porters (called Auxiliary Groups) over the entire 500 miles of the Arakan mountains. At the end of the war, during which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, he was appointed to command of the Division and took it back to Nigeria to be disbanded. It is interesting to note that at this time his official rank was Major (War Substantive Lt.Col.) (Temporary Brigadier) (Acting Major General).

In 1946 he was appointed General Officer Commanding Nigeria District and a member of the Executive Council of Nigeria on the 17th. January 1947. He was Acting GOC-in-C at the time of the first serious post-war disturbances in West Africa (the Gold Coast of 1948) when reinforcement troops were flown in from neighbouring Nigeria in a hotch-potch of civil and military aircraft. Charles Swynnerton was very much loved by his African soldiers and gained the respect, confidence and friendship of many of the local leaders who later came to prominence in Nigeria. For his services in Nigeria he was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath on the 2nd of January 1950.

After leaving Nigeria he was appointed British Military Attache on the 25th September 1949 to what the Foreign Office still rather quaintly called Angora, in Turkey, where his fluency in the Turkish language was a great asset and much admired by the Turks. Just prior to this tour, he was appointed ADC to HM King George VI from 22nd June 1949 until the latter's death in 1952, and subsequently ADC to HM Queen Elizabeth II. After holding the post in Turkey for what must surely be a record period of almost five years, he retired on the 21st July 1954 to a house in Hampshire.

He was appointed Colonel Commandant of the Royal West African Force on 28th September 1954 and Colonel of the North Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's) on 1st June 1955, an achievement without parallel in the history of his regiment. While on an official visit to troops in Sierra Leone in March 1958 in his capacity as Colonel Commandant of the RWAFF he became dangerously ill in Freetown and had to be brought home by sea. Although he recovered fully he had to resign both these appointments and he and his wife eventually decided to leave England and settled in Spain where they built themselves a house near Malaga. After almost fifteen years of retirement in Spain both he and his wife became ill and died in London in 1973 within a few months of each other.

Major General Charles Swynnerton was a keen and talented writer of short stories. In 1938 he won second prize in the Royal United Service Institution's Trench Gascoigne Memorial Essay Competition. He had a large number of articles published regularly under a variety of pseudonyms in such papers and magazines as The Times, Blackwood's Magazine, The Illustrated London News and, of course, his Regimental Magazines.