

## John Swinbank, Elizabethan Vicar of Kirkby Stephen

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The first record for the parish of Kirkby Stephen in the *Clergy of the Church of England Database* (CCEd) suggests that John Swinbank was already a curate there in 1557.<sup>1</sup> In January 1569 he succeeded Percival Wharton as vicar. According to Nicolson and Burn (1777: 536): ‘In 1568, on the death of Percevil Wharton, Sir *John Swinbank* clerk was instituted, on the presentation of John Rigg of Little Strickland gentleman, on a like grant for that turn.’ The last CCEd citation listing John Swinbank as vicar of Kirby Stephen is for October 1606, and on 5 July 1607 Anthony Wetherald (or Wetherell) was instituted as the vicar (see also Nightingale, 1911: 1071).

We know very little about John Swinbank’s 50-odd years in Kirkby Stephen. When, in November 1566, Queen Elizabeth, by letters patent, gave the first Lord Wharton permission to establish a free grammar school in Kirkby Stephen, *John Swinbanks*, clerk, was one of the eight ‘discreate and Honest men’ listed as the original governors of the school, the others being Thomas Musgrave and Thomas Warcop, esquires; Miles Scalfe, Michael Wharton, Anthony Wharton and Ambrose Lancaster, gentlemen; and Philip Machel, another clerk (Swales, 1966: 5, 25). Breay (1996: 98) notes that John Swinbank frequently wrote-out the wills of his parishioners, for example that of Hew Shawe in January 1577.

John Swinbank died in 1607, apparently in York: a caveat, entered on 27 March 1607 by William Fothergill, reads: ‘Caveat against the probate of the will or commission of administration of the goods of John Swinbancke, clerk, late of Kirkbie Steaphen, deceased, before 1 May next unless Giles Swinbancke, nearest relative of the deceased, or Master William Forthergill, his procter, is first informed.’<sup>2</sup> Quite

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Parish (Church): Kirkby Stephen. CCEd Location ID: 757’, ‘Swinbank, Johannes (1557 - 1606). CCEd Person ID: 61816’, *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540–1835* <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk>, accessed 30 May 2012.

<sup>2</sup> As supplied to the family by the Borthwick Institute before 1981.

where John died is unclear, and without access to further primary sources little more could be said about him.

Fortunately the records of the Howard-Vyse family of Langton Hall give more substance to John Swinbank, and help sketch out his family.<sup>3</sup> John was involved in a series of property transactions in York. For example, in June 1599, with his brother Roger Swinbank, a tailor, and his nephew William (Roger's 'son and heir'), they rented out a shop in Petergate, part of the 'tenement of Roger Swinbanck', to John Howseman, a haberdasher (DDHV/71/6). But circumstances changed: Roger died, and in October 1601 William, now of Kirkby Stephen, and the Reverend John Swinbank, re-leased the property to John Howesman (DDHV/71/8).

### **Roger Swinbank, and his 'son and heir' William**

So who were Roger, William and Giles? Roger Swinbank was buried on 4 September 1601 in St Michel le Belfrey, York (ref). He first appears in the York records in 1565, in the chamberlains' account books, as a newly admitted Freeman of York: Roger Swinbank, a tailor from Russyndale, which Palliser (1985: 123) transcribes as Ravenstonedale.<sup>4</sup> Palliser (1985: 116) suggests that 'the push of a common misfortune rather than the pull of York' may have been a decisive factor in encouraging Roger, and two others from Ravenstonedale, to settle in York in 1565, 'for Lord Wharton, lord of the manor of Ravenstonedale from 1546 until his death in 1569, was notorious for his enclosure of Ravenstonedale Park, which appears to have caused depopulation.' Swinbanks were caught-up in this, with Cuthbert Swinbank and Rowland Swinbank just two of the many locals who were involved in a 'surrender' of lands in 1560 to establish the Deer Park (Nicholls, 1877: 24-26). Lord Wharton was, of course, John Swinbank's patron in the adjacent parish of Kirkby Stephen, and three of the four commissioners of Lord Wharton in 1560, dealing with the establishment of the Deer Park, bear the same names as the first governors of Kirkby Stephen

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<sup>3</sup> Held by the East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Records Service, reference DDHV (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A/records.aspx?cat=047-ddhv&cid=-1&Gsm=2008-06-18#-1>, last accessed 9 August 2010).

<sup>4</sup> See also Collins (1900: page ??). Palliser (1985: 112, footnote 11, that this source 'misdates all entries by a year.'

Grammar School in 1566 —Michael Wharton, Ambrose Lancaster and Philip Machel— whilst the fourth was Charles Wharton (op. cit.). Thus it is perfectly possible that John Swinbank came from Ravenstonedale before moving to Kirkby Stephen, but the Parish Registers (ref) do not extend far enough back to identify John and Roger's family. Baptisms and burials are recorded in Ravenstonedale through the 16<sup>th</sup> and into the 17<sup>th</sup> century —children of a Giles Swinbank were baptized in 1606 and 1608 for example— but then records peter out.

Roger, then aged 35, a tailor of York, is listed as a witness over a contested will in the summer of 1577.<sup>5</sup> His 'son and heir', William, a merchant, became a Freeman of York in 38 Elizabeth (1595-96), by patrimony: the son of Roger Swinbank, a 'tallour' (Collins, 1900: ??). However, by October 1601, as we have seen above (DDHV/71/8), William was living in Kirkby Stephen. He died in 1607, at much the same time as his Uncle John.

William wrote his will on 23 December 1606, and an inventory of all his goods movable and unmovable was established and valued on 5 February 1606/07.<sup>6</sup> He left his 'house in Yorke' to his eldest son, Roger, when aged twenty-one. He mentions a younger son William, his wife Florence (who had the use of the house in York until Roger attained his majority), an uncle Reignold Swinbanke, a brother-in-law John Bowland, and his cousin Gyles Swinbanke. So John Swinbank, Vicar of Kirby Stephen, had two bothers (Roger, who appears to have been younger than John, and Reginald), and possibly three, if Giles was not Reginald's son (see table).

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<sup>5</sup> York Cause Papers, CP.G.1857, Borthwick Institute,  
<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/causepapers/causepaper.jsp?id=107474>, last accessed 30 May 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Probate Records ....

## John Swinbank's bothers and nephews

<i>Family from Ravenstonedale?</i>			
John ( – 1607) Vicar of Kirby Stephen	Roger (about 1542 – 1601) Tailor of York	Reginald	<i>Another?</i>
	William ( – 1607) <i>m</i> Florence	Giles	
	Roger      William		

William's widow Florence remarried, and by July 1629, when further transactions in Petergate, York, are recorded, both Roger Swynbancke and Florence Smith, the son and widow of William Swinbancke, are said to be of Durham (DDHV/71/11 and 12).

### And Giles?

What more can we say about Giles, 'nearest relative' of John Swinbank, and cousin of William? In the table I have assumed that *cousin* means 'son of an uncle of William', but whether that is Reginald, or another unidentified individual, is unclear. Giles *might* be one, or more, of the following: i) the Giles Swinbank who baptized children in Ravenstonedale in 1606 and 1608; ii) the Public Notary in the Diocese of Carlisle who witnessed a caveat respecting the church at Orton in 1594 and in 1602 was one of 4 witnesses when Bishop Robinson's brother, Giles Robinson, resigned the archdeaconry (Wilson, 1895: 159); and iii) the deceased Giles Swinbank of Heskett whose 'goods and chattles movable and unmoveable' were valued in June 1613.<sup>7</sup> The latter had three horses as well as cattle, pigs, and standing crops of 'rye pease bigge & oates'; but whether his three horses were just for farm use, or for transport as a Public Notary, is unclear.

Doubtless there is more written about John and Giles Swinbank in the records of the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century that have not, as yet, caught the author's attention. He would be pleased to hear from anyone who has found more.

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<sup>7</sup> Probate Records

## References:

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