

The Appleby Huskissons

Sonia Liff has made a study of one of the more famous attendees at Sir John Moore School and his family ties ...

In part one of a four part series we look at the life of Anne Swinfen

William Huskisson MP is the best-known person to attend the Sir John Moore School in Appleby.



At the time of his death in 1830 he was a prominent politician and very wealthy. In most accounts, he is said to come from an established, landowning, Staffordshire family. However, our research shows that his great-grandfather was a husbandman (a small-scale farmer) in Appleby.

Exploring how the family rose to wealth and high status reveals a web of interesting sibling and wider family bonds with women featuring prominently. In the first of this series of articles we look at the life of Anne Swinfen (1681-1750).

Anne came from a well-established yeoman (land owning) family in Sutton Cheney. Her father, Edward, was the youngest son of his parents so, at a time when entire estates normally passed to the eldest son, was unlikely to receive any major inheritance. Her mother, Jane, was Edward's second wife so her children were down the inheritance line from their step-siblings from the first marriage. As such Anne's future was most likely to be dependent on making a 'good' marriage. Anne married Thomas Grundy, a baker in Appleby, in 1704. They had at least three children.

The Grundy children might have been expected to continue their father's trade. However, their prospects were transformed by their mother's brother. Samuel, Anne's older brother, made his fortune in trade in London after being apprenticed to the Fishmongers' Company. During his lifetime he purchased property from another branch of the family near Lichfield. He died unmarried in 1748 and left his significant wealth to his eldest nephew Samuel Grundy, Anne's son, providing he changed his name to Swinfen to maintain the family line. This required parliamentary permission: the Grundy's Name Act of 1748.

Anne died in 1750 and was buried in Appleby. According to records at Leicester University her headstone recorded that she was the sister of Samuel Swinfen, Merchant of London, and that her son Samuel Grundy-Swinfen was his heir. Unfortunately, this stone can no longer be seen.

Samuel (Grundy) Swinfen died, also unmarried, in 1770 and the inheritance passed to his younger brother Thomas (who also had to change his name).

What has any of this to do with the Huskisson wealth I hear you ask. To find out you will need to wait for the story of Dorothy, Anne's daughter, in part two in our November History Café Newsletter.

Anne Silins recalls Part Two ...

Grandma Bates and her wonderful generation ...

After that business with the badger Anne told you about last month we take up with Great Grandpa.

My old Great Grandpa took up Cock Fighting in the Bull Ring. My Grandma Agnes Annie Bates said she could just remember this taking place. This sport didn't last long however because one cold winter Great Grandpa became ill, he had to stay in bed for a week. To help him recover, Great Grandma made him a special dinner and after eating every bit of it, he said how much he had enjoyed it. She said to him, "that is all good, because that is one cock who will never fight again". This Great Grandma of mine was indeed a spirited woman of her time.

Sometime later Great Grandpa took up trotting races. These races took place on the No Man's Heath Road where he raced his horse Major against anyone who would compete against him. No Man's Heath was an excellent place to hold horse racing at that time, as it was not a village, but a collection of houses and a heath. It was where four counties came together, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire. The races would be run on land which belonged to one county but if and when the police appeared on the horizon from that county the riders would just moved a little distance into another county. They were safe. There was no fine to pay.

Later I received letters from my Grandma Bates's sister Great Aunt Edith (Rowland) Chapman. She told me more tales. Here the tales were about boxing matches which were also held at No Man's Heath. These were illegal boxing matches. Again with the four counties coming together if a policeman approached they just moved over into one of the other three counties. This hamlet of No Man's Heath, was the site of a few lawless activities, and it was a convenient place to escape when pursued by law enforcement.

Evidently earlier in the 1830's large prize fights also took place at No Man's Heath. The hub of these boxing matches was the Red Lion Inn at Appleby. Here the organisers and the spectators could find food, drink and sometimes a few also found lodging. Prize fighting also favoured sites for their matches which were close to county boundaries, and No Man's Heath fitted the bill perfectly. Magistrates viewed bare knuckle boxing as a breach of the peace. It took only a rumour of a boxing match and constables would be deployed to stop these fights and make arrests. Each fight benefited the people in that area, the organisers, the people who provided food and lodging. All made a few pennies.

The spectators who came to watch the matches and enjoyed this dangerous sport could place bets

and sometimes make a little money. In the 1830's, one Appleby farmer who provided the field for the match did make money, as did his workers who prepared the grounds. However one downside of these fights. If a fighter died of his injuries, a jury could convict the winner of manslaughter. Perhaps the fear of such a win caused those bouts to become a little less harsh and more about the participant's skill.



There were less dangerous village sports too like this photograph of a tug of war taken in Appleby Magna in the 1970's.

It is interesting to note that the Red Lion Inn of Appleby became the Red Lion Farm with the same buildings at that location. When I was a little girl the Phizacklea family lived there and had done so for many years. When I had tea with Mrs. Phizacklea 10 years ago, she added with a smile, "you were an inquisitive little lass, some would say nosy, you were always asking questions, so many questions, your Grandparents would just stand and shake their heads at you". When my Uncle John Bates drove the two of us to visit Aubrey Moore and his wife Louise May in Bloxham, Aubrey also said he remembered me as an inquisitive little girl, the one time he met me with my Grandpa.

Appleby's history and stories shows us a village with many types of people and many types of activities and entertainment. Whether the villagers were participants or viewers, they all came together. They were the village.

Wartime hero ...

In next months edition Anne recalls a wartime story ...

Finds behind the book cupboard

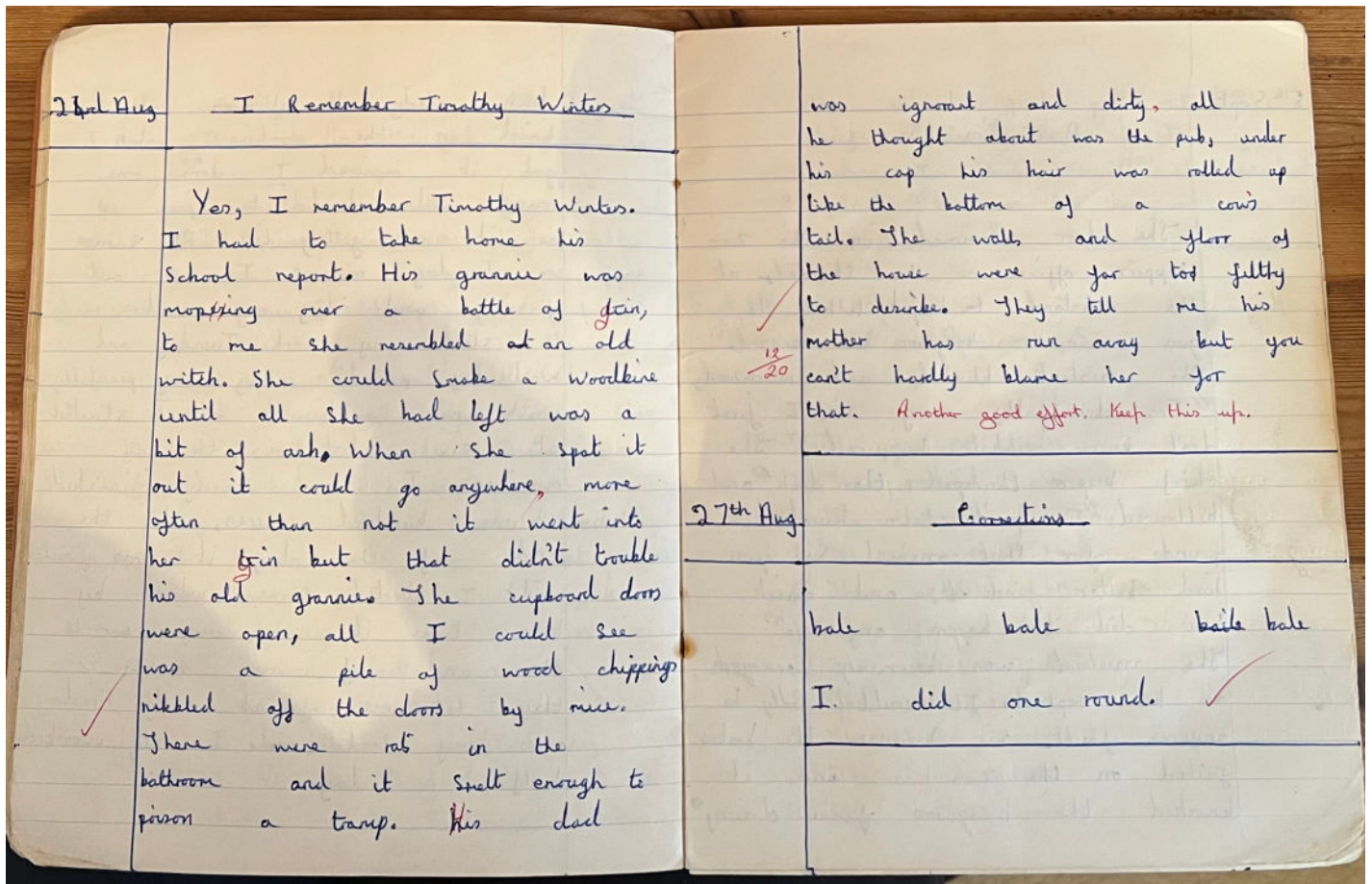
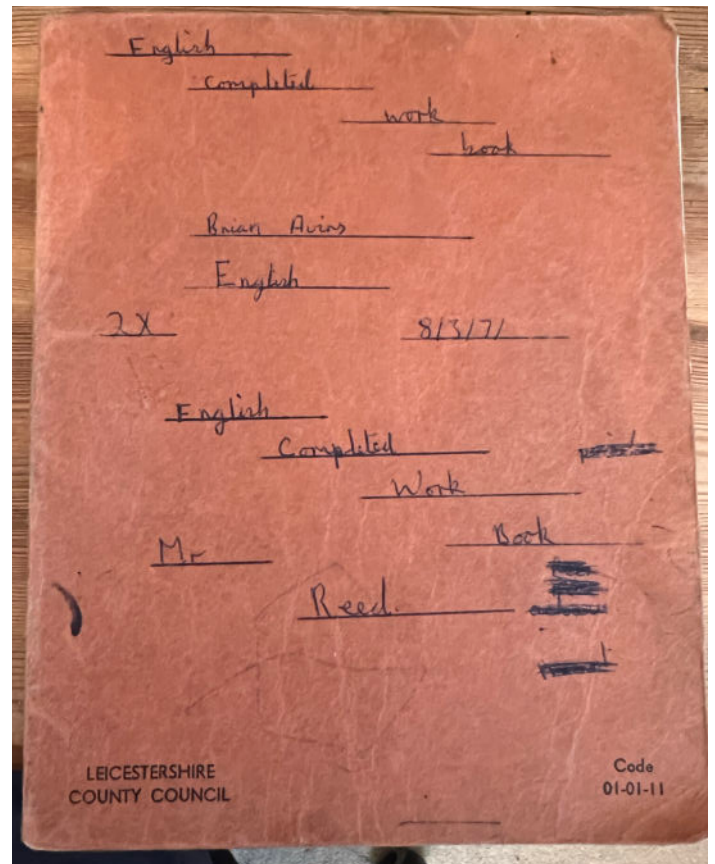
Its always good to have a tidy out, so much comes to light ...

The discovery, made at Sir John Moores during a recent sort out, offers a charming and poignant window into the life of a 10-year-old boy—and the everyday world of 1970s Britain.

Filled with looping cursive handwriting and smudged pencil sketches, the workbook captures Brian's earnest efforts to master grammar, vocabulary, and creative writing. His exercises include sentences about his pet spaniel, Rex ("Rex is clever but he chews my shoes"), a short story about a knight battling a dragon ("Sir Cedric's sword was rusty, but his heart was brave"), and a heartfelt essay titled "When I Grow Up," where Brian declares his ambition to become a writer. "I want to make stories that make people laugh and think," he scribbled, "and maybe one day live in a castle (but not a draughty one)."

Beyond its personal significance, the workbook is a cultural artifact. Dr. Emily Hart, a historian of education, explains:

"Children's schoolwork is rarely preserved, yet it captures ordinary life in ways official records can't. Brian's mentions of 'helping Mum with the washing machine' or 'watching the moon landing' show how global and domestic histories intertwined for children."



The museum is on the top floor of the Sir John Moore School. It showcases what life was like in Victorian times at the school, and explores the history of the school, the village, and the people who lived there. You can book a group tour in the school holidays, or visit us on one of our free exhibition days. Please see our website for further details, or contact our Museum Manager. Sally.lowe@sirjohnmoore.org.uk

Our latest exhibition upstairs is all about the Winter family. The museum collection contains quite a lot about the Victorian members of this family – the family bible, which lists births and deaths of the family since the 1700s; several in memoriam cards, which Victorians used to send as part of funeral celebrations; an indenture for an apprentice, and some photos. It is a lovely insight in to a time when Appleby was a very



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different place, with a tight-knit community supporting several shops and businesses. The Winters are an old Appleby family, and during the course of our research into the history of several houses in the village, we have discovered that most of them have had Winters live there at some point in their timelines.

The SJMF museum is delighted to be opening the on site café in September! It's new name is (drum roll please.....) The Tuck Shop! We'll be serving hot and cold drinks, cakes and other treats on Wednesday afternoons 2-4.30pm, and whenever the museum is open on Sundays – please see our website for further details.

Birmingham Museum has a new exhibition about rock legend Ozzy Osbourne, who died at his home in Buckinghamshire on 22nd July.

This free temporary exhibition, entitled Ozzy Osbourne, Working Class Hero, was opened by Sharon Osbourne in June. A new memorial space was attended by over 3,500 fans on the first day. There is a book of condolence, and fitting for a man who made sound his career, a voicenote book of condolence.



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Ozzy revealed that he was suffering from Parkinson's Disease in 2020, but is known to have had several health problems over the last ten years.

Born in Warwickshire, Ozzy was the lead singer of Black Sabbath, and had his own solo career. He sold over 100 million albums worldwide. He became a reality tv show, founded Ozzfest, and in 2015, he received the Ivor Novello Award for Lifetime Achievement from the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors.

The exhibition runs until 28th October 2025.

You can visit the museum in Birmingham Wednesday – Sunday, 10am-5pm.

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