

Swallowfield Owners

1043-66. Enclosed by Edward the Confessor
 1066. William FitzOsbern held custody - Governor of Winchester
 1071. Roger (son) succeeded to the Earldom of Hereford with all lands held by his father; he had great position & was the originator of the Domesday Survey
 1085. Roger convicted of treason & lands passed to Gilbert de Breteuil, under tenant, companion of William the Conqueror
 1090. Held for Abingdon Monastery
 1167. Under the 'Barons' Charters of 1166-8 held by Thomas St John & his mother
 1176. Inherited by Roger de St John (son)
 1216. Inherited by John de St John (son)
 1230. John died & his widow Emma married Geoffrey Le Despencer
 1252. Geoffrey died & son John Le Despencer succeeded; his mother Emma looked after Henry III daughter, Princess Katharine
 1256. Sir John Le Despencer petitioned Pope Alexander IV seeking permission to build All Saints Church (restored in 1869-70 by Sir Charles Russell)
 1258-64. John Le Despencer subsequently became a rebel baron & joined Simon De Montford
 1265. Swallowfield & lands in Beaumys were granted to Roger de Ley-Bourne
 1272. Roger died & William (son) inherited
 1276. William died & the Kings tenant became John de St John of Lageham
 1294. John de St John gave to St Ethelbert's Hereford, 'for the good of his soul' the church of Shinfield & the Chapel of Swallowfield
 1299. The de Beauchamps became tenants & successive Earls of Warwick lived there
 1316. The second Baron de St John was restored until his death in 1322 & it passed to John the third Baron
 1333. By 1333 Edward III had the lands given over to Sir John de Ifeld, but by 1342...
 1342. The de la Beches (from the manor of Aldworth, Berks called la Beche - the Beech tree) held Swallowfield & Beaumys Castle.
 1346. Nicholas de la Beche died & the lands passed to his wife Margery
 1347. In 1347 she was carried off & forcibly married to Sir John de Dalton...the King Intervened to recover his lands & sent Sir John to The Tower
 1353. Roger de St John died & Swallowfield reverted to the King where he used it for breeding Royal horses, Edward III kept a large stud
 1366. Edward III granted 18 acres to John de Fourey (the Kings Clerk of Works)
 1375. Edward III gave his daughter, Isabella de Coucy (Countess of Bedford) a grant of the manor with his park for a rent of 'four marks yearly'
 1377. Isabella died & through marriage the lands passed to the Arundel family
 1382. In 1382 the manor of Swallowfield was granted for life to Queen Anne of Bohemia
 1383. Thomas de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, becomes owner-in-chief of Swallowfield for 20£ in peacetime & 40£ in times of war
 1397. Thomas went to the Tower & all lands were passed to Thomas Holland, Earl of Kent
 1400. Thomas Holland plotted against Henry IV & was executed & lands reverted to the Beauchamp family, who had found favour again through the 4th Earl
 1401. Property granted to John de Lancaster, The King's son
 1435. John de Lancaster had now become John Plantagenet, Duke of Bedford, & left all estates to his nephew, King Henry VI
 1438. Henry VI granted the living to John Martyn, Groom-Usher of the Chamber
 1443. On John's death it was granted to John Penycoke, Groom of the Robes
 1461. John Penycoke fled to Scotland with Henry VI
 1464. King Edward IV held all Henry's land & passed Swallowfield to his wife Queen Elizabeth Wydville (Woodville)
 1483. At the death of Edward IV all lands passed to Richard III & he granted Swallowfield to William Tirwhitte (his 'armiger de corpore')
 1485. Accession of Henry VII & it was passed back to his mother Dowr. Queen Elizabeth Woodville
 1486. Lands were passed to her daughter Queen Elizabeth of York who died in 1503
 1509. Henry VIII grants Swallowfield to Katherine of Aragon 'in dower for her life'
 1511. But it was Richard Smyth who lived there as Bailiff & Yeoman of the Robes
 1533. Henry VIII granted 'in dower' to Queen Anne Boleyn
 1536. To Queen Jane Seymour

1537. To Queen Anne of Cleves
 1541. To Queen Katharine Howard
 1543. To Queen Katharine Parr...she died in 1548 & Christopher Lytcott continued as Bailiff
 1553. King Edward VI sold Swallowfield to Christopher Lytcott for £783-8s-2 3/4d
 1554. Lytcott died & his wife lived there until her death in 1567
 1567. Inherited by eldest son John Lytcott
 1574. John sold to John Cade
 1581. Cade sold to Anthony Higgins
 1582. Higgins sold to Samuel Backhouse
 1598-1601 Samuel Backhouse was High Sheriff of Berkshire
 1603. Samuel Backhouse is elected 'member for Windsor', he was later implicated in the Gunpowder Plot & had to answer to Parliament several times
 1626. Samuel died & was buried at Swallowfield - John Backhouse inherited
 1649. John died & William Backhouse inherited, his great friend was Elias Ashmole
 1662. William died & daughter Mrs Flower Bishopp inherited & married her cousin Sir William Backhouse (son of Nicholas) who became High Sheriff
 1669. William died & Flower was married (for the third time) to Henry Hyde the Viscount Cornbury KB (son of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon)
 1675. Henry became the second Earl of Clarendon on his father's death & was made High Steward of Reading - great friends with John Evelyn & he specifically mentions Swallowfield in his diaries
 1689. The Clarendons retired to Swallowfield, but are implicated in a plot against the King....causing Samuel Pepys to write about both Clarendon & Swallowfield in his famous diaries. They make many alterations to the house
 1700. Flower (Backhouse) died after the family being there for 118 years
 1709. Lord Clarendon died & is succeeded by his son Edward, Lord Cornbury
 1719. Edward sold Swallowfield to Thomas Pitt ('Diamond Pitt'), Governor of Madras, Pitt was the subject of a great scandal surrounding a huge diamond which he 'brought back' from India - he touted it around Europe &, in 1717, sold it to the Regent Philippe Duke d'Orleans for the French Crown.....it now forms the centrepiece of the French Crown Jewels as 'the regent diamond'
 1722. Thomas Pitt undergoes extensive alterations to the house & has 'Pitt Bridge' built
 1726. Thomas dies & is succeeded by his son Robert
 1727. Robert dies & is succeeded by his son Thomas
 1737. Thomas sells Swallowfield to John Dodd for £20,770, whose great friend was Horace Walpole.
 1755. John Dodd became MP for Reading
 1782. John died to be succeeded by his son Col. John Dodd
 1783. Col. John sells Swallowfield to Sylvanus Bevan of Fosbury Wilts
 1788. Bevan sells on to Timothy Hare Earle, Gentleman Usher of the Privy Chamber to George II
 1816. Timothy dies & is succeeded by his son Timothy Hare Altabon Earle, High Sheriff of Berkshire
 1820. Earle sold Swallowfield to Sir Henry Russell (Commissioner of Bankruptcy), he had also spent considerable time in India & had been Chief Justice of Bengal
 1836. Sir Henry died & his son Henry succeeded to the baronetcy & property
 1852. Henry dies & is succeeded by his son Sir Charles Russell, third baronet
 1883. Charles died unmarried & the house passed to his brother George, who had married Constance (Lennox) the Duke of Richmond's daughter in 1867. Sir George was Dep. Lieutenant of Berkshire, a Governor of Wellington College & Chairman of South Eastern Railways. Constance & George had in their circle of friends, Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Millais, Halle, Kingsley.....Charles Dickens dog, Bumble, was given to George & Constance after his death & it is buried at Swallowfield in their pet cemetery
 1898. George died & was succeeded by his son George Arthur
 1944. George Arthur died & was succeeded by his brother Arthur Edward
 1964. Arthur died & Swallowfield was sold & converted into apartments in 1965