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Notes on the Saxon de Aldithley Family

From Leofwine, Ealderman of the Hwicce of Mercia c 975 – c1025

To Henry 1st Baron Audley c1175 - 1246

Compiled by Richard Sneyd, March 2012.

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The Aldithley/Audley Family

Introduction.

Richard Sneyd, a direct descendent in the male line, has traced the Audley, Stanley & Sneyd families back to Leofwine, Ealdorman of the Hwicce in Mercia.

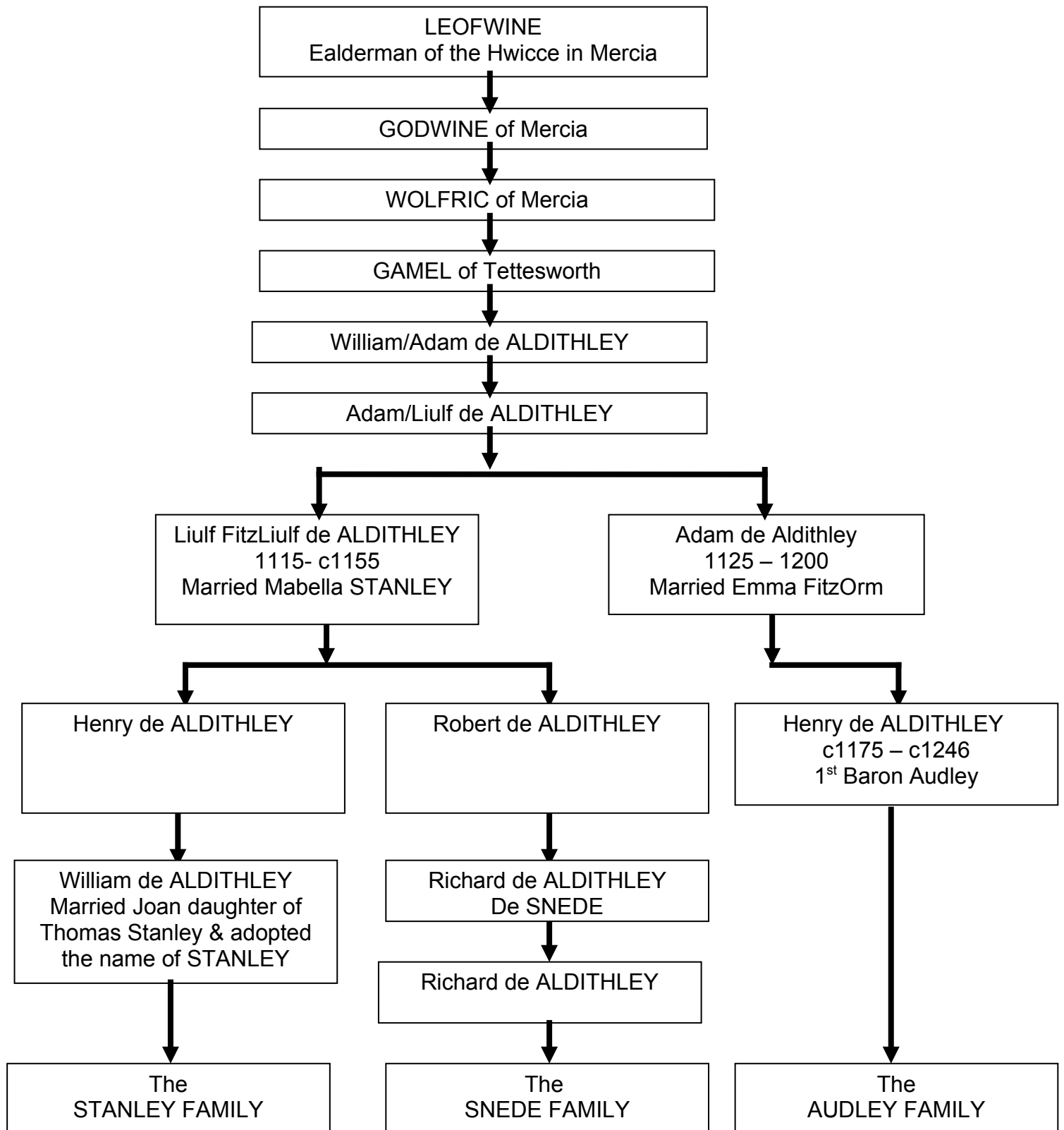
In the absence of documentary evidence it is very difficult to trace family origins. Sandra Burgess wrote in the first paragraph of her MA thesis of 1990 on the family of Ralph Sneyd 1723 - 1793, *'the origins of the Sneyd family have become shrouded and distorted with the passage of time. The historian is presented with many vagaries and gaps in documentary evidence, but inevitably this must occur in the study of most ancient families, and quite obviously, there are many explanations for such non-uniformity.'*

The internet both enlightens and confuses but does provide a much broader source of information than has been available before. Dates are very approximate. Names are problematic, often with different spellings of the same name.

Googling can produce different versions of the same story but Richard Sneyd understands that information provided for Wikipedia by distinguished academics is thoroughly researched.

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SAXON ORIGINS of the AUDLEY. STANLEY & SNEYD Families.



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The Kingdom of the Hwicce. Leofwine Ealdorman of the Hwicce in Mercia.

According to Wikipedia the Hwicce were one of the peoples of Anglo-Saxon England. The exact boundaries of their kingdom are uncertain but it is likely they coincided with those of the old Diocese of Worcester & stretched from the neighborhood of Bath to Staffordshire. The territory of the Hwicce was assessed at 7000 hides in the Tribal Hidage, giving it a similar sized economy to the kingdoms of Essex & Sussex. The Hwicce sub-kingdom included a number of distinct tribal groups. It is likely that the Hwicce were converted to Christianity by the Celtic Church.

The Kingdom of the Hwicce was conquered by Penda of Mercia in 628 AD and by the 780s the assimilation of the Hwicce into Mercia was complete and their leadership was transferred from a line of Kings to Ealdermen of whom Leofwine was the penultimate, his dates are given approximately as between AD 950 and 1023 and he became Ealdorman during the reign of King Aethelred II, 978-1016. Leofwine was apparently one of the few English earls to remain powerful during the reign of King Cnut. There was a family link between Leofwine's family & Cnut's first wife Aegifu of Northampton.

King Cnut, Eadric Streona Earl of Mercia

King Cnut reigned as King of England from 1015 to 1035. He was the son of the Danish King Sweyn Forkbeard and at one time was King of Denmark, England Norway & parts of Sweden. Delegation was essential if Cnut was to successfully control four countries. King Cnut overcame the long established Anglo Saxon dynasty of Alfred & Aethelred; Wessex was the last province to submit to Cnut, late in 1015.

Eadric Streona who had been Ealdorman of Mercia since 1007 deserted Aethelred, together with 40 ships and their crews and joined forces with Cnut. Eadric was rewarded by Cnut with the Earldom of Mercia. The victorious Cnut had divided England into four great provinces, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia & Northumbria each of which he eventually placed under the control of an earl (a title new to the English) replacing the Anglo-Saxon "ealdorman". Eadric Streona was apparently an arch villain and was killed in 1017.

Leofric Earl of Mercia.

King Cnut appointed Leofwine's eldest son Leofric as Earl of Mercia either immediately in 1017 or certainly before the 1030's. Leofric, among the four mighty earls was second only to Earl Godwin of Wessex. Leofric married Godiva, better known as Lady Godiva 1040-1070. He died in 1057 and was succeeded as Earl of Mercia by his son, Aelfgar, (not by Lady Godiva) who died in 1062.

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Edward the Confessor reigned as King of England from 8/6/1042 to 5/1/1066 when he was succeeded by Harold Godwinson who was killed at the battle of Hastings.

Aelfgar/Algar, Earl of Mercia. Edwin, Earl of Mercia.

Leofric's son Aelfgar (Algar) was given in 1051 the Earldom of East Anglia, formerly held by Harold Godwinson, At Easter 1053 Earl Godwin formerly Earl of Wessex died and Harold became Earl of Wessex and the earldom of East Anglia returned to Aelfgar who died 1062. Aelfga's son Edwin succeeded his father as Earl of Mercia in 1062. After Harold's death at the Battle of Hastings Edwin & his younger brother Morcar, elected Earl of Northumbria, were the principal supporters of a new regime under Edgar the Atheling, but they both failed to take effective steps against the Normans and they soon submitted to Duke William.

Their sister Ealdgyth/Edith was first married to the Welsh King Gruffydd ap Llywelyn & then Harold Godwineson, King of England in 1066, until his death at the Battle of Hastings 14/6/1066.

Leofwine through his son Leofric was father and grandfather of several of the most powerful people in England before the Conquest.

The Audley descent from Leofwine, Ealderman of the Hwicce in Mercia.

Godwine of Mercia.

Leofwine's son Godwine was known as Godwine of Mercia and was the ancestor of the Aldithley/Audley family. Godwine was born about AD 979 at Balterley. When he died before 1056, Godwine owned the lordships of Audley, Balterley & Talke; three settlements contiguous to each other in the north east corner of Staffordshire close to the Staffordshire border. The name of Godwine's wife is not known. He had a son known as Wulfric of Mercia. His uncle Leofric Earl of Mercia died in 1057 but Wulfric was very much part of the Mercian "Royal family".

Wulfric of Mercia.

Wulfric of Mercia was born in 1009 in Leek, Staffordshire and was still alive in 1086 according to William the Conqueror's great Survey of 1085/1086 (the Domesday Book) wrote, "*The King holds Lec & earl Algor son of Leofric earl of Mercia has held it*" Wulfric was Lord of Leek under the King. Wulfric seems to have inherited Leek from his cousin Aelfgar/Algar, earl of Mercia who died in 1062.

The aftermath of the Norman Invasion.

When William Duke of Normandy narrowly won the Battle of Hastings on 14/10/1066 he took over the personal ownership of all the land in England. His faithful band of Normans who had helped him win the Battle of Hastings were granted the over-lordship of vast grants of lands, purposely scattered over

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many counties so that they did not acquire too much power and influence in one area. Robert Tuoni the young Norman Hereditary Standard Bearer at the Battle of Hastings was made the Castellan of Stafford and given 181 lordships in seven counties, eighty one lordships in Staffordshire, including Norton-in-the-Moors, Madeley, Burslem, Hutton & Rushton.

King William also rewarded Richard the Forester born in Flanders in 1050. Richard was appointed to be the forester in charge of all the new forests. He was given nine lordships in Staffordshire including Tunstall, Chaddersley, Chell, & Normancote.

Some of these lordships became the property by inheritance of Emma/Petronella FitzRalph FitzOrm, a considerable heiress who married Adam de Aldithley 1125/1135 – 1200/1210. Adam, a thane (early equivalent of a knight) the father of Henry de Aldithley, 1st Baron Audley.

After the Conquest, King William appointed eleven Tenants-in-Chief in Staffordshire with the King shown as Tenant in Chief of Heighley, (three miles to the south west of Audley) & Trentham,

There was a shortage of Normans to take local responsibility, especially in the poorer areas like Staffordshire. Some Saxon landowners like Wulfric retained their former land but owed military service to their Norman overlords. Some twenty years after the Conquest King William made his Norman councillor Henry Lupus 1st Earl of Chester the overlord of Leek. Henry Lupus was given command of Tutbury in Staffordshire.

Wulfric of Mercia's cousins Edwin, formerly earl of Mercia, his brother Morcar formerly earl of Northumberland and his sister Edith widow of the Welsh King King Gruffyd ap Llywelyn & Harold Godwineson were in opposition to King William immediately after the Battle of Hasting in 1066. In 1068 Edwin, Morcar & Welshman raised a rebellion in Mercia against King William. They were defeated at the Battle of Stafford in 1069/1070. The people of Staffordshire were loyal to their Anglo-Saxon leaders particularly Edwin & Morcar.

King William took devastating vengeance on Staffordshire after the battle of Stafford. He laid waste immense tracts of the county, according to Domesday these included Biddulph, Endon, Bucknall, Shelton & Cheadle Hutton & Rushton. Erdswicke

Edwin formerly earl of Mercia was betrayed to the Normans by his own retinue and was killed in 1071.

Edwin's brother Morcar formerly earl of Northumbria, joined the rebellion against King William in 1071, initiated by the Abbot of Ely and tactically organised by Hereward the Great. When the Isle of Ely was opened to the Normans, Morcar was captured and imprisoned. He remained in captivity until King William's death in 1087, the dying King ordered the release of all prisoners, after a brief period of freedom Morcar was again imprisoned by William II and died in captivity.

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Wulfric of Mercia married Elfrana Poncius daughter of William Poncius, Count of Arques & Thoulouse, son of Richard II Duke of Normandy. Elfrana was therefore a cousin of William the Conqueror. This connection may well have saved Wulfric from the fate of his cousins Edwin & Morcar. Elfrana may have persuaded Wulfric not to actively support his cousins in their rebellion against the King

Wulfric was appointed a thane by the King. He was Lord of Aldithley, Talke & Balterley & Tettesworth. There is a Saxon cross at Talke on a hill overlooking the Cheshire plains.

Wulfric & Elfrana had three sons (1) Swanbrook de Tettesworth who inherited Tettesworth, (2) Adam de Tettesworth who inherited Rudyard, Adam's son Ranulphus married the heiress Alicia de Verdon de Alveston. (3) Gamel of Tettesworth who inherited Aldithley, Balterley & Talke.

Tettesworth or Tittesworth is a hamlet lying in the Frith division to the north of Leek and to the east of the present Rudyard Reservoir. Rudyard is a settlement on the banks of the Rudyard Lake, which was authorised in 1707 as a reservoir to feed the Caldon Canal.

Gamel of Tettesworth

The Audley descent is through Wulfric's youngest son Gamel of Tettesworth born around 1009. The Earl of Chester gave Gamel the lordship of Aldithley, which was recorded as having enough land for three ploughs (only two were used), one acre of meadow and a wood two miles long and one mile long. The land was worth ten shillings, a considerable sum in those days.

In the Great Survey of 1085 Gamel was described as holding Aldithley, Talk and Balterly and Cedde & Mottram St Andrew, a village in east Cheshire, south of Macclesfield and close to the Staffordshire border. Gamel had married the heiress of Mottram St Andrew. In 1086 there were sixteen thanes holding land in Staffordshire

Gamel, (who from about 1086 held his land by military service for life to the Earl of Chester rather than the King) was the chief Thane and was known as the Tainus Regis (King's Thane) Royal Thegn, he was next in importance to the Earls, previously called Gesiths, who became attached to the King by service and gained lands as a result of their loyalty. Gamel was chief of the other Thanes in Staffordshire.

Gamel is shown in the 1085 Survey as holding Aldithley, Balterley & Talk on the Hill which were assessed as two virgates, (3 virgate is a quarter of a hide often 20 or 30 acres), half a virgates, and one virgate respectively. These lands contained nine villeins, six borderers, three and a half ploughs having a total value of seventeen shillings, a huge sum in those days.

Adam the first de Aldithley, also known as William.

The Audley succession goes through Gamel of Tettesworth's son Adam de Aldithley. Born c 1067 he was the first person to be given the identification of de Aldithley when he inherited early in the reign of King Henry I (1100 -1135) the Audley, Talke & half Balterley properties to the west of Tettesworth near the Cheshire border.

Liulf/Adam de Aldithley born c 1088.

Adam/William de Aldithley had a son Liulf/Adam de Aldithley born c 1088. He inherited Audley, Talke and half Balterley, By 1124 the over-lordship of the lands that had been held by the Saxon Thane Gamel from King William/Henry Lupus 1st Earl of Chester) had passed to the Norman de Verdun family. The de Aldithley/Audley family rendered military service to the de Verduns until 1231 when Nicholas de Verdon, the last of the male line died. The Audleys did their military service under the coat of arms of 'or a fret gules' of the de Verduns which the Audleys eventually differenced to 'gules a fret or'. The background was changed from or (gold) to gules (red) & the fret (interlacing) from gules (red) to or (gold).

Descent from Adam de Aldithley & Emma FitzOrm to Henry 1st Baron Audley, the Founder of the Audley family.

Adam de Aldithley/Audley & Emma FitzOrm

The principal line of the Aldithley/Audley family descended through Liulf/Adam de Aldithley, born 1088 to his younger son Adam de Aldithley/Audley. Born c1125 died c 1200 having lived for 75 years. Adam married Emma FitzOrm a great heiress daughter of Ralph FitzOrm of Darlaston & Okeover & his wife Lettice de Montgomery. Ralph FitzOrm was the son of Orm le Guidon, (Orm the Standard Bearer) a feudal follower of the de Verdon family.

Emma FitzOrm also inherited lands at Tunstall, Chaddersley, Chell & Normancourt, which had been awarded by William the Conqueror to Richard the Forester. Other lands descended to Emme, which had been awarded to Tuoni, King William's Standard Bearer at the Battle of Hastings. Tuoni adopted the name of Stafford and became Lord Stafford. A well connected Saxon family like the Aldithleys attracted in marriage ladies from Norman families keen to assimilate into the new society.

Adam appears to have been the first member of his family to have used the surname 'de Aldithley' on official documents. In 1155 and again in 1150 Adam witnessed a charter of the former abbey of Croxden c 1180.

Adam de Aldithley played a prominent part in the retinue of his over-lord Bertram de Verdon and acted as his deputy when Bertram was Sheriff of Warwickshire & Leicestershire from 1158 - 1183. He succeeded Bertram as Sheriff of these two counties in 1184 & 1185 and acted as his Deputy in

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Cheshire in 1185. In 1190 Bertram accompanied King Richard I to the Crusades in the Holy Land, before leaving Bertram granted the manor of Stanleigh to Adam. The manor of Stanleigh is about five miles west of Leek. At the time of the Great Survey in 1086, it was part of the larger manor of Endon which later became part of the de Verdun estates. Stanleigh was a Saxon place name meaning a meadow or clearing which was stony or craggy. In 1192 Adam exchanged his new manor of Stanleigh with his great nephew William de Aldithley's properties at Talke on the Hill, Aldithley & half of Balterley. Their mutual ancestor Godwine of Mercia had been born in Balterley in 979. William born about 1170 was the great grandson of Adam's elder brother Liulf FitzLiulf and had married Joan daughter of Thomas Stanley. On acquiring Stanleigh/Stoneleigh William changed his name to de Stanleigh founding the Stanley family, who after the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 became Earls of Derby.

Henry de Aldithley 1st Baron Audley.

Adam & Emma de Aldithley had a son Henry de Audley. Henry born about 1175 died before 1246, Henry inherited property from his parents, and his elder brother who died without issue. He was also richly rewarded for his continuing loyalty to King John 1199-1216 Henry married secondly in 1217 in Edgmond Cheshire, Bertrad de Mainwaring the daughter of Sir Ralph Mainwaring and Amice of Chester who was descended from the Earls of Chester and consequently from Robert 1st Earl of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of King Henry I.

Henry de Audley became very rich and powerful and was created 1st Baron Audley. The Audleys became one of the most important families in England

Descent of the Sneyd & Stanley families from Liulf FitzLiulf de Aldithley born 1115 the elder brother of Adam de Aldithley born 1125.

The Sneyd family descended from Richard de Aldithley de Snede the grandson of Liulf de Aldithley born 1115. Richard was a first cousin of William de Aldithley who changed his name to Stanley and founded the Stanley family.

The 1192 property exchange when Audley was transferred from William de Aldithley to his great uncle Adam meant that William and Richard no longer had a stake in Audley, which might have been an incentive to start the Sneyd & Stanley families. By the 15th century the Sneyd family had acquired some 20,000 acres from the Audley/Tuchet family who had been in financial & political difficulties.

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