

An Archaeological Appreciation and Historical Notes  
to accompany a visit by  
Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group  
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# SWINFEN HALL



by

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(Photos from Keith Jordan's Collection)

## SWINFEN HALL — An Architectural Appreciation.

Swinfen Hall was designed by Benjamin Wyatt in the Francis Smith of Warwick tradition. It is a brick built house with stone dressings and is two and a half storeys high, with the half storey above the cornice.

The raised entrance has a stone pediment above the doorway, which has a Trygliph frieze above it and a Tuscan column either side.

The symmetrical front elevation has seven bays of windows and four Ionic applied pilasters, with Ionic capitals. The capitals are distinguished by having spiral projections and are carved making them Roman rather than Grecian Ionic.

The roof has an impressive balustrade with balusters supporting a coping. A coat of arms sits above the central bay.

The style of the house is 'Baroque' It employs classical motifs freely to produce an effect of grandeur without regard for the strict rules of classical proportions. It is a style that owes little to convention and all to effect. The aim is to produce a strong consciousness of the mass of the building.

The view that the style is Baroque is supported by the use of applied pilasters, over-emphasised keystones and brackets, and the use of a balustrade to hide the roof.

A first view of the house would suggest that it was built in the early eighteenth century than the second half, since by 1750 the Palladian style was very much the vogue. The owner must have wanted a house of an earlier style built or the architect may have been influenced by Francis Smith who designed Stoneleigh.

In Pevsner's book it is suggested that the half storey may be a later addition. On seeing the house, however, it would seem to be more likely that the house was originally built with two and a half storeys. This view is reinforced by the fact that the house is shown with two and a half storeys in the fine drawing of the house by the Rev S. Shaw. This drawing was done for John Swinfen (John Grundy) who inherited the estate in 1770, and shows how the house and landscape was in the late eighteenth century.

## SWINFEN HALL - Historical Notes.

The Manor of Swynfen in the Parish of Weeford was recorded in the Domesday Book as belonging to the Bishop of Lichfield. A manor house is reputed to have stood on the present house's site in medieval times. It lies close by the Lichfield to London road and 3 miles from the Cathedral.

The pedigree of the Swinfen Family can be traced back to Henry de Swinefen - Deputy Sheriff of Worcester under Robert Marmion, Baron of Tamworth in the 12th century.

Samuel Swynfen M.D. born 1682 sold the estate to Sam Swinfen, a merchant of London, in 1736. Sam Swinfen claimed to be a relative of Samuel Swynfen's elder brother Richard Swynfen of Shenstone, who was representative for Tamworth in 1708 and held substantial lands to the north of Sutton Park.

Sam. Swinfen went to London and became servant to a Hamburg merchant and managed to aquire for himself a large fortune. He took down the old Swinfen Hall and built the present Hall in 1755.

The architect was Benjamin Wyatt of Blackbrook Farm, which still stands alongside the Blackbrook on the London Road at Weeford. His father John Wyatt lived at Thickbroom a short way upstream where a house still stands. Benjamin Wyatt had seven sons, one of whom was the emminent architect James Wyatt.

Sam Swinfen died in 1770 and John Grundy inherited the estate and changed his name to John Swinfen.

I.D. PHILLIPS. 1992.



Rear Elevation of Swinfen Hall



Rear Elevation of Swinfen Hall





**Gardens at Rear including Ornamental Pool**



**Detail of Roof and Chimneys**



Detail of Front Entrance