

A Winder's Tale

By R.G. Winder

Originally published in the July 1990 edition of the Newsletter of the Guild of One Name Studies

My reason for putting together the present synopsis is essentially because of the number of enquiries that I have received regarding the family and the derivation of its name. In the course of my researches, I contacted the Guild of One-Name Studies, in order to ascertain whether anyone else was interested in the name. This did not prove particularly fruitful, as it transpired that no one had previously evinced the slightest interest in the name. However, in what can only be described, with benefit of 20:20 hindsight, as a moment of magnanimous stupidity, I agreed to act as a "clearing house" for others who might, at some time in the future, be interested in this surname. As a consequence of this, I have been able to reflect, ruefully and with a certain degree of irony, upon the acronym for that august body - GOONS!

The resultant one - name group does not have membership lists nor, unlike some of the more erudite one - name groups, does it publish its own Journal; indeed, it must be one of the least effective groups in the world! Luckily interested parties do not need, as yet, to join or pay a subscription - just being a Winder, or knowing something about them, is sufficient.

There are two common pronunciations of the name; as In "binder" and as In "cinder"; the dictionary defines these two, respectively, as follows:

Winder (wei-nder). 1552, [f. WIND v. + ER] A person or thing that winds, in various senses. I. One who turns or manages a winch or windlass, especially at a mine, 1747. 2. An operative employed in winding wool, etc., 1552. 3. One who winds a clock or other mechanism, 1323. 4. An apparatus (of various kinds) for winding something, or upon which something is wound or coiled, 1685. 5. A key for winding a jack, clock, or other mechanisms, 1606. 6. A winding step in a staircase; usually in the plural, opposite to flyers. 1667.

Wi-nder. 1611. [f . WIND v. + -ER] 1. (wel-nder). One who blows a wind instrument. 2. Something that takes one's breath away, a blow that "knocks the wind" out of one; run or other exertion that puts one out of breath, colloquial, 1925.

So much for the pronunciation possibilities. Next, where did the name come from? There are only four common derivations of English surnames, namely, occupational, place, patronymics and descriptive or nicknames. In the case of the Winders, the most obvious derivations are the first two. The occupation of winding (principally of wool, cotton, etc.) is well known in the North of England; there even used to be a "Weavers, Warpers and Winders" Trade Union. However, as far as place names are concerned, there are several English, but no Scottish, Welsh or Irish, locations possessing this name. The Ordinance Survey Gazetteer of Great Britain gives the following:

((table uncopiable—consists of several place names incorporating "Winder" and their locations))

Closer examination of these reveals that, with the exception of the sole examples in Surrey and Warwickshire (both of which are probably in windy locations), the others are all in Cumbria or Lancashire. Those in Cumbria (apart from the large lake) are chiefly in the region of Pooley Bridge and Frizington, whilst that in Lancashire is in Roeburn, about 10 miles east of Lancaster and south of Caton. As regards Lake Windermere, this name is said locally to be derived from that of an ancient Norseman, "Vlnandr", although the justification of this assertion remains unclear.

It seems unlikely that patronymics could provide any clue, but the descriptive or nickname should not, of course, be totally ruled out. Maybe an early ancestor suffered from asthma, indigestion or even excessive flatulence!

On balance, it seems most likely that the derivation of the name Winder, pronounced to rhyme with "binder" was occupational, whereas the name pronounced to rhyme with "cinder" was probably of geographical origin.

It may be worth noting at this point that surnames derived from place names were originally rendered as "de", as in Robert de Wynder. There are numerous references to members of the Wynder family, with one spelling as Winder, in "The Royal Forest of Lancaster". It would seem that in the 14th century records of the forests of Lonsdale and Amounderness, the Winders/Wynders were not unknown for interfering with the

king's deer and not to the advantage of either king or deer!

Concentrations of the surname can be established from British Telecom directories and it has been said that this enables one to pinpoint the area(s) from which a name originated. These show that the name is most common in the north west of England, especially in Lancashire and Cumbria, although there are definite "pockets " in other parts of the country, principally South Yorkshire, Sussex, Leicestershire and Kent.

Research into published genealogical sources produced "Records and Reminiscences of some of the Winder Family for 200 Years" by Thomas Hall Winder. The author was the second son of James Winder, the first town clerk of Bolton, and himself was for many years the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy for Bolton and District. He refers in his book to a well-to-do family of Winders in the area around Lorton, Cumberland from the 15th to 17th centuries and mentions the area around Lancaster, Garstang and Wyersdale as another location, especially Over Wyresdale, where large numbers [of Winders] are to be found in the parish registers.

One thing upon which all sources seem to agree, at present, is the coat of arms and crest that has been used by the Winder family. The former being a green and yellow chequerboard design with a broad horizontal red stripe (chequy or et vert a fess gules), whilst the latter is described as "out of a ducal coronet or, a bull's head ermine holding in the mouth a cherry branch slipped and fructed proper"; in other words, a bull with a mouthful of cherry branch. The motto "Nulla pallescere culpa" appears to be derived from the poet, Horace, and is rather equivocal. The full quotation from Epistles I i 60, reads "Hic murus aeneus esto, nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa", which may be translated as, "Let this be your wall of bronze, to have nothing on your conscience, no guilt to make you turn pale" and seems to imply that the Winders prefer a clear conscience.

Despite the relative absence of published material, there is no shortage of documents relating to the Winders. Indeed, Lancashire Record Office has been the source of numerous Wills, Bastardy, Filiation and Removal Orders, Quarter Sessions Judgments, Applications to the Justices , etc.

My own branch of the family remained in the same place from the 18th to the late 19th century. This was Lathwaite or Leithwate Farm near Cockeram, Lancashire. The farm, which has always been tenanted, still exists and has been in the Sutcliffe family since

1916. The Winders of this branch were, practically without exception, husbandmen or agricultural labourers, the eldest son becoming a farmer upon the death of his father, until during the Industrial Revolution, they were tempted to the towns of Lancashire.

John Winder, born 6 December 1856, was such a one. First becoming a farm labourer, he moved to East Lancashire as a carter. Then he followed this by working in a brewery, but was later described as an engine driver and completed his working life as an "Electrical Works Labourer".

The family's link with Lathwaite Farm seems to have been broken, when Richard Winder succeeded to the farm on the death of his father in 1852. Richard, who was 26 at the time, appears to have run the farm for some years, but ten years after his father's death married Mary Leigh Pearson, the daughter of James Sherwill Pearson of Preston, gentleman. His fortunes changed and shortly after his marriage his address was given as Bloomfield House, Porton. Although it is never wise to jump to conclusions, his marriage did not seem to profit him in the long term, as he died of cirrhosis of the liver in 1888. presumably through a combination of a lack of exercise and an excessive consumption of alcohol, no doubt paid for by his wife's substantial resources. Mary Leigh, on the other hand, lasted to the ripe old age of 82 and finally died of diabetes and senile decay.

Then there was Cornelius Winder, a 17th century rake, If ever there was one. Here, from surviving court records, we can glimpse a picture of a man, who had at least two and, from some evidence, possibly three wives, at the same time. He petitioned to be let out of Lancaster jail (where he was incarcerated for bigamy, failing to support his original family and several other misdemeanours) because his premises were allegedly being looted. At the same time the villagers from his home village were petitioning the Justices to remove him from Jail and confine him "in the House of Sorrows", whatever that might be, which they thought was a more appropriate punishment. Unfortunately, it is unrecorded as to how these petitions were finally resolved.

The Winder family may have often lacked money and/or substance, but they never seemed to lack for characters! Several correspondents have also mentioned the "Winder nose", but whether this was cause or effect remains to be established.

At the moment, my own direct line has come to a full stop with John Winder, a

husbandman of Winmarley, Lancashire, who died February 1719/20. I know a little about his two brothers and a cousin from their Wills, but no earlier connections have come to light at the Lancashire Record Office, despite all efforts. A number of Wills and other documents remain to be transcribed, but, from a preliminary glance, I do not expect these to be of help.

It should also be said that the name is not confined to the UK. The word has exactly the same principal meanings in German, where it is pronounced Vinn-der, as in English. There is, or was, a German branch, of which probably the most famous member was Ludwig, the Jewish author, who fled from the Nazis in 1939 and eventually died in Baldock, Hertfordshire, in 1946. An article to celebrate the centenary of his birth on 7 February 1889 in the small Moravian town of Holleschau, appeared in the Swiss "Neue Zuercher Zeitung" on February 4/5th, 1989. (It is amazing the information people will send you once they know that you are interested in a particular surname.) It is highly unlikely that there was, or is, any connection between the British and German families, the only thing in common probably being the spelling and meaning of the name.

There may be families of the same name which originated in other countries, but apart from the expatriate branches in Australia, Barbados, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, I have not, so far, encountered any.

The religious orientation of the family seems to have been anything but consistent and Protestant, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Atheist and Agnostic members have all been identified.

My ultimate objective, as with all one-name groups, must naturally, be to locate all members of the Winder family, living and dead, and fit them into their appointed position not only on the family tree, but also in their historical context. This, of course, is unlikely to be achieved. However, I will always be delighted to hear from anyone who can throw further light on the family, whether this be details of family members, published references, personal knowledge, photographs, documents, reminiscences or any other information.

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Note: Mr Winder resigned from the Guild in 2006 so regrettably we can give no address for him

