

YE STYAN CHRONICLES - PART 16
GROWING LIKE TOPSY

THE BACKGROUND

Your Chronicler (YC) originally started to produce these essays sixteen years ago to record items of his own Styan family history which his research had revealed, and which he thought might be of interest to his near relations.

Although he never intended to conduct a study covering everybody bearing the name Styan - or having Styan roots - his curiosity got the better of him when he came across others with that unusual name in the records. Then like Topsy it just grewed.

Very little original research was done by YC in 1993 but fortunately an event occurred during the year which he reckons is worth recording in these 'Chronicles'. This was the first "International Styan Rally".

The driving force for this event came from Canada (where several gatherings of this kind have taken place) and it would not have happened without their initiative.

Although the occasion needed a small amount of organisation, it was in YC's opinion a success because of the spontaneous way in which the people who came reacted. He thought that basically it just happened (rather like Topsy).

WHAT HAPPENED

For the record, several Canadians and Americans who had hoped to attend were prevented from doing so, but this was compensated for by the arrival of more UK Styans than YC expected. They came from a number of branches, most of whom had never met each other before. Some had done Family Tree research of their own.

They descended on the Yorkshire village of Whixley on the morning of 5th June 1993. This was selected as the main venue because most families who attended had their earliest verified Styan roots there. Those who could not be proved to have origins there certainly came from that locality.

In this we were fortunate to have with us Professor David Kendall who has Whixley Styan ancestry and whose research into Whixley and its Styans predates YC's efforts by many years. He kindly set the ball rolling by giving a short talk on this topic - appropriately from the pulpit of the Parish Church (which had been specially opened for the occasion) and a transcript of this can be supplied by YC on request.

The churchyard - which contains a number of Styan gravestones, and which it was hoped would be a highlight of the event - had become overgrown with weeds since YC's previous visit some weeks before. The profusion of Spring flowers around the village had also died in the interim.

At this point a group photographic session took place. Here a small communication failure occurred and one family, unaware that this unscheduled item was taking place had already departed for lunch. The results of YC's own photographic efforts were marred by his omission to load his camera with film. Nevertheless all was not lost and a copy of one donated picture appears herein.

Lunch at a pub some miles away then provided the opportunity for socialising and for people to get out family photos and documents that they had brought with them. The atmosphere was greatly enhanced by a number of people sporting golf shirts specially personalised for the event in Canada with the logo 'STYAN WHIXLEY 93' and bearing appropriate national flags.

A couple of non-Styans who were in the pub having a hitherto quiet lunch were progressively engulfed by Styans and were nearly mistakenly absorbed into the clan.

When those of our transatlantic cousins who were staying at a hotel in York retired thence for the evening a further group of UK Styans who had been unable to get to Whixley during the day visited them there. This brought the total present at some time during the day to just over 40 - including the odd fiancée yet to qualify as a Styan.

WHO WAS WHO?

A number of branches of the clan were represented, some very distantly related and they came from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Cheltenham, Hull, Merseyside, Cambridge, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesbro, Surrey and various other places in Yorkshire too numerous to mention. The ages ranged from 75 to one-ish.

Where they all fit in is shown on the enclosed 2-sheet Family Tree. Most branches shown have already appeared at some time in these 'Chronicles' and YC leaves it to the reader to discover where. For various reasons not everybody got into the enclosed picture, but YC can assure the reader that those who missed out were all as good-looking as those who didn't. The numbers identify who was who on the Family Tree.

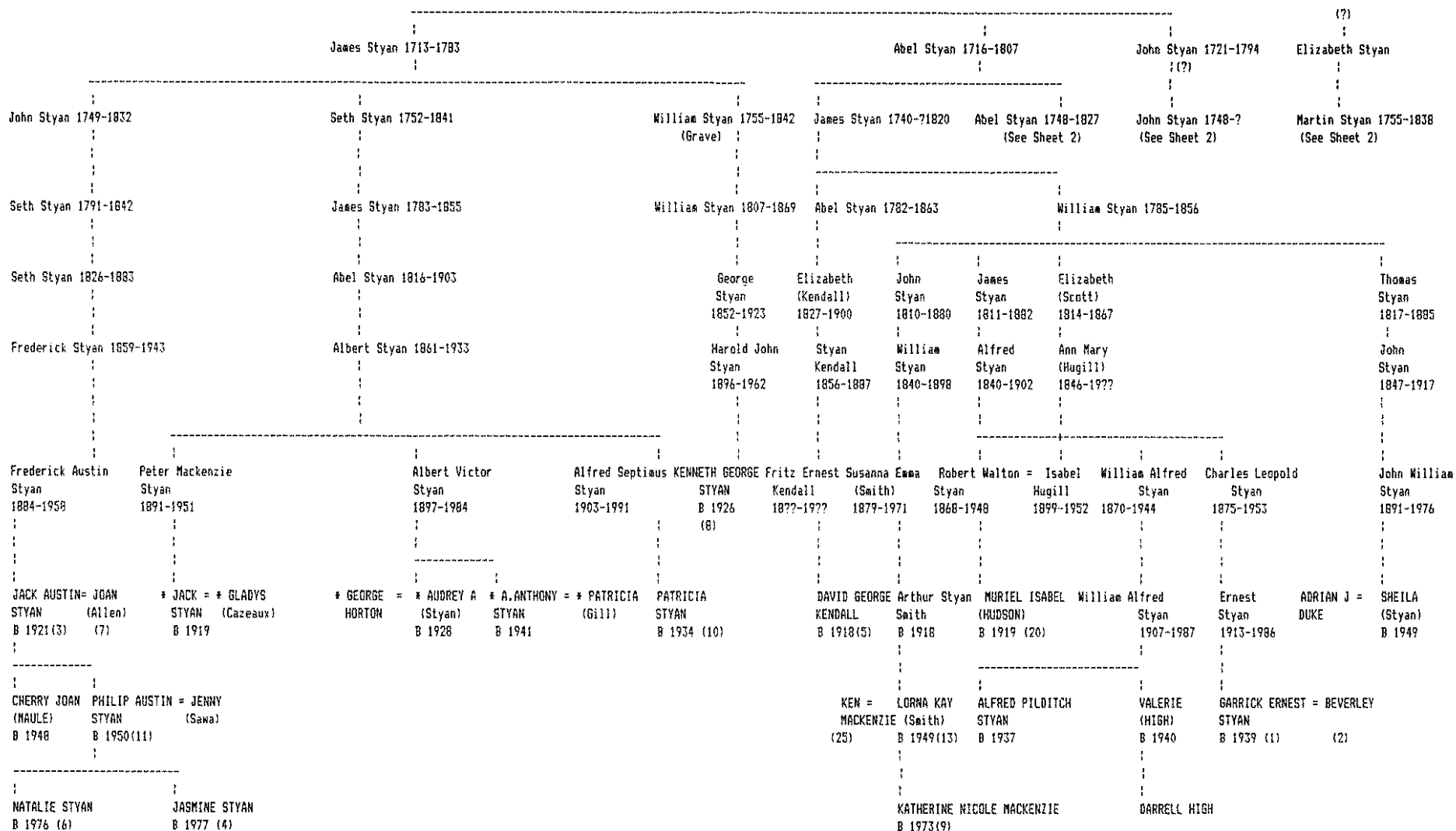
A SECOND CHANCE.

Several people have expressed regret at not being there and maybe their chance will come. Another gathering was suggested for some future occasion in Canada. Will anybody interested let YC know. That is how word got around this time.

A smaller scale event could take place in 1994. A month after the 1993 event YC got a letter from Australia asking when it was going to be, as the writer was hoping to visit UK in 1993/4. If anybody is interested in a more casual gathering - perhaps in the south of England in the summer of 1994 - please speak up (particularly if they are prepared to participate in setting it up). It is possible that our antipodean cousin and the odd North American who missed out may also be able to make it - given reasonable warning.

THE STYAN GATHERING -1993 (SHEET 1)

James Styan 1684-1728



Names in capitals - present at Reunion. (Number) - Number in photograph

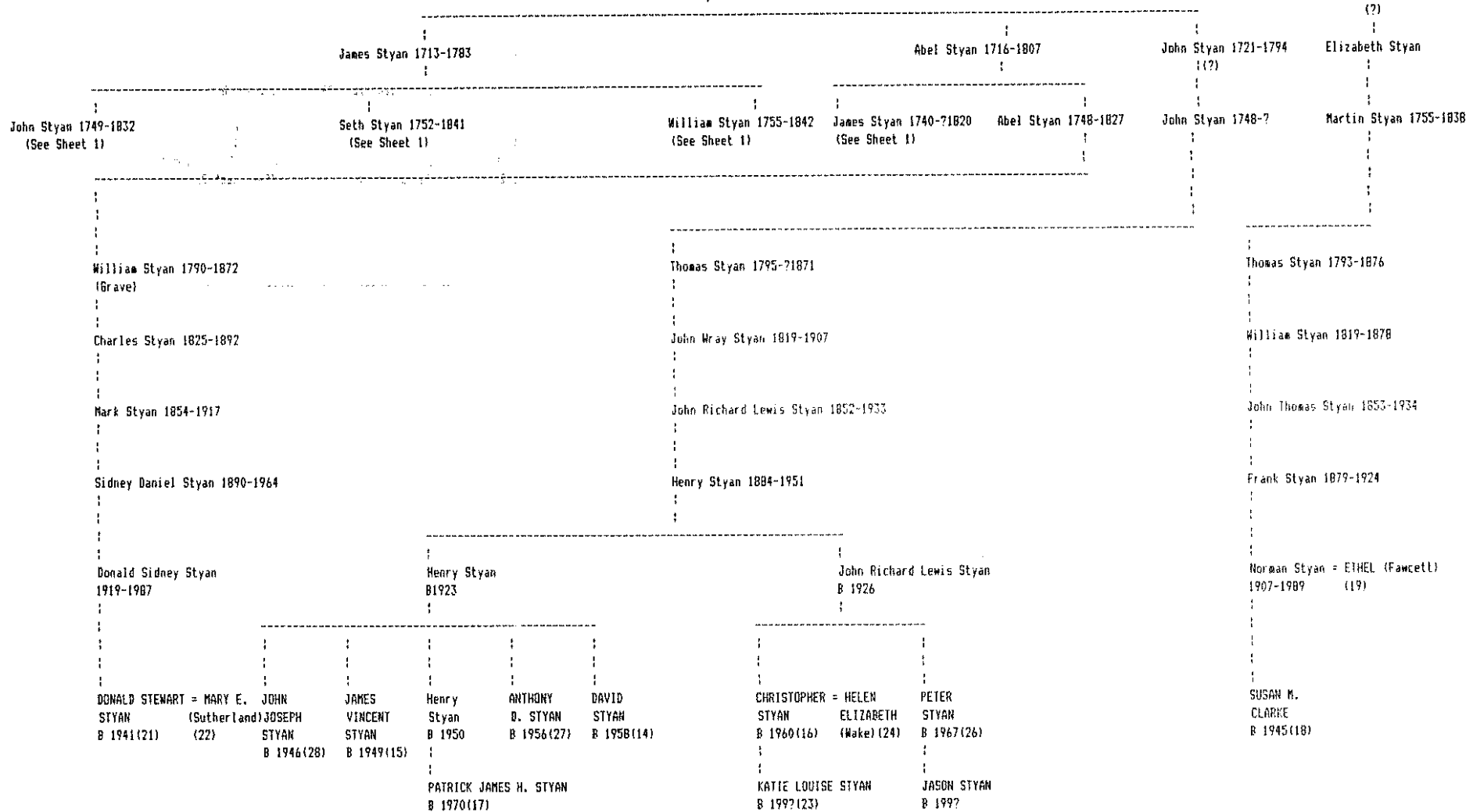
* Evening Only

(Grave) - Identified gravestone in Whixley Churchyard.

KGS 30 Nov 1993

THE STYAN GATHERING -1993 (SHEET 2)

James Styan 1684-1728



Names in capitals - present at Reunion.

(Number) - Number in photograph

* Evening Only

(Grave) - Identified gravestone in Whixley Churchyard.

KGS 30 Nov 1993

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.

YC's attention has been drawn on several occasions by one of his correspondents to an ancient character called Styan Thirlby (1686?-1753). Thirlby was a critic and theologian with a 2-column entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, and this is difficult to summarise here in a fair way.

He was the son of the Rev. Thomas Thirlby and grandson of Henry Styan, Gent. At school it was reported that 'his self-conceit was censured as very offensive. He thought he knew more than all the school'. He graduated as BA at Cambridge at 18 and is described as indolent, quarrelsome with an unhappy addiction to drink.

In 1710 he anonymously published an intemperate pamphlet on the occasion of the dismissal of the Whig ministry. He produced a number of learned works on theological topics for about 12 years which appear to have been largely venomous attacks on contemporaries working in that field.

Of his main work in 1722 Bishop Monk wrote 'so violently has resentment got possession of him that he gives full reins to invective, and rails against classical studies and Bentley in so extravagant a style that he makes the reader, at the very outset of his work, doubt whether the editor was in a sound mind'.

Thirlby then decided to practice medicine and for a while styled himself 'Doctor' at which time he lived with the Duke of Chandos as his librarian. He then took up Civil Law and although he is said to have become LL.D. he didn't like it and turned to Common Law but tired of this before being called to the bar (perhaps he preferred the other bar).

In 1741 his friend Sir Edward Walpole procured a sinecure for him as a 'king's waiter in the port of London' - whatever that is - worth about £100 a year. (Did he have to sample the port?). He retired quietly to private lodgings and sometimes indulged in heavy drinking. He then functioned for a while as a critic on Shakespearean works but did not abandon his abusive style. He was posthumously credited in Dr. Johnson's edition of Shakespeare as commentator - he having died in 1753.

ANOTHER ANAGRAM.

It was recorded 2 years ago that Tansy (an anagram of Styan) was an aromatic herb. It now appears that it gets rid of nits in the heads of little children. How this is done is not known by YC.

Another anagram is Ansty. This is a place-name of several localities in England. One of them was in fact an RAF airfield 4 miles NE of Coventry. Shame on you YC for missing that one - having served for 8 years as a navigator in the RAF. Go away and do your research thoroughly next time.

