

JOHN HUNT (1922-2004), AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, A TRIBUTE, AND AN OBITUARY

[This autobiography of John Selwyn Hunt, (with a footnote and a later obituary by Warren Skidmore) was first published in the *Newsletter* of the Skidmore Family History Group, No. 16 for August 1996. (WS)].

A fairly brief note on how, when and why I became interested in the Scudamore family. It happened initially through my mother, Helen née Goold. My father, Frank Hunt, was a banker employed by the National Provincial Bank as it then existed. He worked in Cheltenham where he and mother were married, and where I was born in 1922. My mother, Helen Martha, was the daughter of John Arthur Gould and Emily Jane (Brain). Emily Jane was the daughter of Thomas Bennet Brain and Emily (Scudamore). Emily (born 1833) was the daughter of John Scudamore (1791-1851) by his first wife Ann (Young). John Scudamore came from Abenhall, a hamlet (or really farmstead), near Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire, where he farmed.

My mother had preserved some notes on her side of the Scudamore family, but it was when I was at Oxford University in 1948 that I met a friend, an American, who had made an intensive study of the Barnwell family. This encouraged me to try family history study. The surname "Scudamore" came to mind because it was not a particularly common name, but mainly because of my mother's connection. The Bodleian Library came in handy as a source of information on records and books.

I did not make much headway in my studies of the Scudamores until about 1968. I had worked for the Glaxo Pharmaceutical firm at Montrose, Scotland, from 1954, so that there was not much opportunity of studying records in libraries such as in London, Gloucester or Hereford, except during certain holidays. It was in 1968 that I had a letter from a good friend, the late LieutenantCommander John Lucas-Scudamore, of Kentchurch, Herefordshire, who enclosed a transcript containing several lines of the Scudamore family from the earliest days up to about the end of the 15th century. This typescript had been composed by a Mr. Warren Skidmore, of Akron, Ohio, and was given to Lt.-Cmdr. Lucas-Scudamore by Mrs. Rider who had called in to see him on a visit from America.

This typescript prompted me to write to Warren, and it was the start of our mutual enthusiasm and researches into the Scudamore/Skidmore clan and has continued ever since! My main contributions were to the families in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and surrounding areas, from their earliest known beginnings. More recently I have concentrated on the families from the Bristol and Avon districts, from where Warren's forebears originally came.

Now to my family background. I have a sister who is one year older, and a brother who is four years younger than I am. In 1928 my father was transferred from the Cheltenham branch of his bank, where he was cashier, to Droitwich, near Worcester, where he was manager. I went to a

preparatory school in Worcester and then to King's School there. In 1935 my father was transferred to the branch at Barton-on-Humber, Lincolnshire, where he eventually retired in 1946. I changed school on his transfer, going to the grammar school at Brigg, a few miles south of Barton.

In 1940 I left school and joined the Army. I was commissioned in the Royal Signals in 1941 and served in North Africa during the War. After the end of the war I served in Italy, Denmark and Palestine, having transferred to the 6th Airborne Divisional Signals. I was demobilised in 1946.

In 1947 I went to Wadham College, Oxford, and read Chemistry, graduating in 1950. That year I married Judith Kitchener at Potton, Bedfordshire, which is her home town. After an additional year's study at Oxford I joined the Glaxo Pharmaceutical Company in 1951 at Greenford, Middlesex. Three years later, in 1954, I moved to Montrose with the factory that Glaxo had set up there that year, and which manufactures many well-known pharmaceutical products. I remained at Montrose until 1984, with occasional duties overseas with the Glaxo Companies in Italy, India and Pakistan, in which year I retired.

Our children, three girls and a boy, were born between 1952 and 1958. They all attended school at the Montrose Academy, and later went to various universities. Following my retirement Judy and I decided to move to Potton where Judy's relatives live, and we have lived here ever since. This move facilitated access to London and to various Record Offices, and from which I have been able to extract useful information relating to the Scudamore and Skidmore families.

A footnote by WS:

Shortly after John Hunt wrote to me in September 1968, Lady Patricia very kindly asked John and myself to stay at Kentchurch Court with herself and Jack Lucas-Scudamore. The Commander was, without doubt, the most entertaining man I have ever met, and we had this and several other fine weekends under the portraits in the dining room (where Jack shared all of the oral history of the family that had been told to him by his grandfather). We unrolled the Tudor pedigrees on vellum in the library, and looked at much more that had come down to Jack as the heir to Kentchurch family. Lady Pat (now his widow and the wife of John Phipps) is the legal representative to the Scudamore-Stanhopes -- until her father's death the Earls of Chesterfield -and she has a keen interest in her branch of the family once at Holme Lacy.

Jack wrote soon after that he had been asked to revise his pedigree for a forthcoming (and as it turned out, final) edition of Burke's *Landed Gentry*. The three of us collaborated on this, and took a sneaky advantage of several Scudamore-Scudamore marriages to integrate all of the principal families in Herefordshire into seven pages of very small type -- which the editor kindly accepted and published in 1972. Some insufficiencies are of course now apparent after 25 years, but it is still the best account of the Herefordshire family in print.

We have now done a greatly enlarged account of the family in the whole of England, together with a good many notes on branches in America, Australia, Canada, India, and elsewhere, which will go shortly (with luck) to the printers. We have stayed with the familiar Burke's format which allows packing a great deal of information into a very small space. The last

printout from the computer runs to over 400 pages with a complete index to names and places in tiny 8 pt type (this is 10 pt). John and I have divided interests both geographically and by period. I am primarily interested in the medieval family, and those of the name on this side of the Atlantic (which presently outnumber the native Brits) down to 1920.

I tend to chop off branches now with the Stuarts, but John continues to add details taken from the obituaries in yesterday's *Times*. He has also worked very hard on the families in Kent and London and they have good cause to be grateful. We have had a large input from several other serious researchers. Linda Moffatt on the Black Country family, Peter Skidmore on the Derbyshire Skidmores, George Skidmore on the name in the Home Counties, are just a few of those that come to mind in England. Even so, we have not accounted for every individual mentioned in the IGI, nor have we been able to attach every family to the main stem which begins in both Herefordshire and Wiltshire in the 11th century.

Our collaboration has now slowed down; I, for one, am getting old and dim of vision. I used to spend a part of every year in London and John would sometimes be able to arrange a business trip down south for Glaxo. We would then spend days on end in the PRO or at Lambeth Palace doing chancery suits or (for me) the old plea rolls. The time has pretty well come for us to pass our main amusement down through the years on to a new and vigorous generation of electronic-assisted searchers who (hopefully) will have a far easier time of it!

John's latest project has been to copy all of the births, marriages and deaths for the family from the indexes to the registers at St. Catherine's House in London, or from microfilm copies at the Cambridge Record Office. The Scudamore entries were finished some time ago, while those for Skidmore (which are far more numerous) are well along. John - modestly - says nothing about this *herculean* task (copying just a few years in a single category can take an entire day) which will certainly endear him to generations yet to come. The editor of this Newsletter has a copy of this great reference tool about the British family of of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Join me please in a toast (in the best Scudamorean cider) to **John Selwyn Hunt!!**

JOHN HUNT, 1922-2004, AN OBITUARY

JOHN HUNT::HAIL AND FAREWELL. John is gone. He did good things for his Potton community, "Meals on Wheels" and work as a lay person on appeals for the parish church. His reward, I think, was to miss all the indignities usually thrust on the elderly. He managed to live alone in some comfort after Judy's death, and then to die quick and clean while waiting to go off on a church walkabout. I heard from him at least twice a month since 1968, but missed his usual Christmas greeting last year. I wrote, and had a nice letter saying that he was well but no longer felt up to travel to London in pursuit of the family. I used to come over to the U. K. once or twice a year, and John and I would make the rounds of the PRO (mostly), the Guildhall Library, the Society of Genealogists, and a variety of minor record repositories. Our interests complemented one another. I was big on the medieval Skydmores, with a minor interest ending with the death of Charles I. John, on the other hand, was interested in the Herefordshire family everywhere, every date, right down to the obituaries in yesterday's

newspaper. I was computer literate in a small way (thanks to Colonel W.F Skidmore of Tennessee), so the publishing fell largely to me. John undertook the immense chore of copying the index to all of the vital records (births, marriages, and deaths) for both Skidmore and Scudamore from 1837 forward. I spent two half-days one year working with John on this project, which I found totally mind-numbing but he persevered at the chore until it met his criterion. I expected my investigations to turn up something with biographical detail, and spent more time on the Plea Rolls or Chancery Suits. John did a lot of fine family history reporting, all of it neatly typed and now deposited in Hereford, but descendants of the family throughout the world will probably always be most grateful to him for "Hunt's Index." R.I.P.