

Down Memory Lane (a Long Way): Reappearance of Traces of a Viking Ancestry

A very big thank you to Emma and James who recently cut back a very tall hedgerow adjacent to the Green.

This has benefitted the parish in several ways. Firstly, residents who live near the junction between School Road and The Street, are now able to park their cars further off the highway; secondly a ditch, carrying water originating from many of the houses further up-bank, will be much easier to maintain and thirdly, both parishioners and visitors, will find it easier to enjoy a highly valued landscape feature of Swannington: the ancient flower-rich grazing meadows on the flood plain of Swannington Beck on both sides of the Green.

Just how ancient these grazing meadows may be, can be judged from the series of earthworks now visible on the east, as well as those on the west, side of the Green. Viewing the meadow to the east, it is just possible to pick out a series of low ridges surrounding slightly shallower hollows. These were identified by an archaeologist as being relics of the earthworks of a Viking settlement.

The Viking helmet on top of the village sign acknowledges a Nordic phase in the history of the village, as is reflected in the name of "Swannington". This has nothing to do with large white birds. "**Swann**" is a derivation of the Old Norse word *Sweinn*, meaning *youth*; "**ing**", in Old English, can either mean "*people of*" or "*a small stream*" while "**ton**" is Anglo-Saxon for *village*. Putting these elements together, one possible translation of our village name could be: "**Village of youthful people by a small stream**".

(Given that some of these old earthworks are only about 5m from our garden, could it then be further argued that nothing much has changed for the last 1100 years!! especially the "**youthful residents**" bit? . 😊)

So thank you very much indeed to Emma and James, for causing a chapter of the village's heritage to reappear.

Thank you also to the Parish Council for their very positive approach and the Bambridge's family business for making such a neat job of trimming the hedge back.

Mark Hassall (March 2018)



Looking east across the meadow in which some remains of earthworks are believed to have Viking origins