

CHAPTER 2

SWALCLIFFE

Facts about the Sodens in the two hundred years between 1350 and 1550 are few and far between. Though the name occurs in a number of records of the period, no continuous story can be told or a family tree built for all of the six or seven generations who would have been born during this time. Though records do exist they are fragmentary and often illegible because parts are missing or have been badly maintained or repaired. But despite these difficulties it can be established that the ancestors of the present family lived in Swalcliffe, a parish in Oxfordshire on its north-west boundary with Warwickshire, for the whole of this period and, following the move of Gregory Soden to Bourton-on-Dunsmore in the 1560s they continued to live in Swalcliffe until the late eighteenth century, a period of about 450 years. No link, however, has as yet been discovered between the Swalcliffe Sodens and those referred to in Appendix I.

Even before 1350 some inferences may be drawn from records which place the Sodens in locations other than Swalcliffe that they may have originated there in earlier times.— Swalcliffe was a very large parish covering an area of nearly 7,000 acres, divided into a number of administratively self-contained townships, viz. Swalcliffe itself, Sibford Gower, Sibford Ferris, Burdrop, Shutford East, Shutford West, Epwell and the Lea, and these eight townships contained an even bigger number of manors. From the time of the Domesday survey of 1086, much