

FENCOTT  
family.

It may be that in this area the family name “Fencott” originated from the people who lived at, or in the vicinity of, what is today Fencote Abbey Farm. At the time of Domesday Book in 1086 Fencote was a sub-manor of Leominster.<sup>1</sup> It lies about six miles east of Leominster, just south-east of Hatfield. On the 1832 Ordnance Survey Map it is spelled “Fencot”. But caution is appropriate. I have done no specific research into this; it is no more than a possibility and there may well be other places named Fencot(e) in this area- after all, there are two, entirely separate, streams named “Stretford Brook” within five miles or so of Leominster.<sup>2</sup>

There is one very early (1291/1292) and four early 16<sup>th</sup> century references to members of the Fencott family. These relate to places outside the parish of Eardisland, but being not far away, I break my declared intention to include in these Papers only matter directly related to Eardisland.

The first of these, relative to 1291-1292, recites that “An 20 Edw. William son of Miles de Fencote was found kill’d in the Manor of Stok<sup>3</sup> it is not known who killed him.”<sup>4</sup>

A gap in my records of 233 years then intervenes, taking us to 1524, when, probably in Leominster, Thomas Fencot was assessed for, and/or paid [for wages] “xxs,xiid”<sup>5</sup> under the “First Post- Memorial Payment, 1524, following the 1523 Subsidy Act.”<sup>6</sup>

The following year (probably the same) Thomas Fencot again suffered taxation, this time “xxs iiiid”<sup>7</sup> under the Second Payment following the 1523 Subsidy Act.<sup>8</sup>

Further detail from the same source tells us that in 1544, at Aymestrey “...no Fencot...” [Jonothan?] was assessed for and paid “iid” [on goods?], and at Burrington, Cecilia Fencot, a widow, was assessed for and/or paid xxs, iid, on goods.....under the First Payment 1544, following the 1543 Subsidy Act.

The first reference I have to the family in Eardisland itself comes in 1665 when a Roger Fencott was assessed liable to pay Hearth Tax for one hearth in Eardisland at Michaelmas 1665. Where exactly in the parish he lived is yet to be established but, in spite of the relatively early date, is not beyond the bounds of possibility.

By 1703 “The Broom” was owned by Richard Fencott as evidenced by the fact that, dated to that year, Mr John Hyet served as Overseer and Churchwarden “for ye Estate he rented of Richd. Fencot of the Broom”.<sup>9</sup>

Then in 1709 it was recorded that Roger Fencott served as Overseer and

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<sup>1</sup> Hillaby, J & C. Leominster Minster, Priory and Borough c.660-1539. Publ: The Friends of Leominster Priory in association with Logaston Press. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The 1832 Ordnance Survey Map refers.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps modern Stoke Prior?

<sup>4</sup> HRO BN 30/8 where a source “Pleas of the Jury and Assize at Leominster” is quoted.

<sup>5</sup> 20shillings 12pence = £1-1-0d in pre-decimal money.

<sup>6</sup> Faraday, M.A. (Ed). Herefordshire Taxes in the Reign of Henry VIII. Publ: The Woolhope Club, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> 20shillings 4pence =£1-0-4d in pre-decimal money.

<sup>8</sup> As footnote 6, above.

<sup>9</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

Churchwarden "for his house at the Lime".<sup>10</sup> What relation, if any, he was of Richard of the Broom has yet to be established. Richard Fencott surfaces again in 1715 when he was one of the Homage at a manorial court at Hinton.<sup>11</sup> Thus at least some of the land which he held in connection with the Broom may well have been situated in that manor.

In 1724 it was the turn of Richard Fencot himself to serve as Overseer and Churchwarden "...for his house at ye Broom."<sup>12</sup> and he was followed in 1730, and again in 1739, by another member of the family (other families having intervened) by "*Roger Fencot for ye Lime*".<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the same Roger as in 1709.

Then, dated 1st January 1740 comes a reference which links the Fencotts to another family in the parish. In the Court Rolls of the Manor of Eardisland (copyholder's copy), it is recorded that Roger Fencot, in his sole name, surrendered certain lands into the hands of the Lord of the Manor, who then re-granted them to: "*Roger Fencott and to his daughter Ann Sheward and to Mary Sheward daughter to the said Ann and to the heirs of the said Mary according to the customs of the aforesaid manor*".<sup>14</sup> The document goes on to give details of the land in question, but that is for another Paper, "*Who, Where, When?*" - forthcoming.

Late the following year, on 14th October 1741, by the same means, he transferred more copyhold land into the names of his daughter and granddaughter, this time ruling himself out completely: "...from Roger Fencott to Ann Sheward and Mary Sheward with their Admon." As before there is a positional description of the land, but it adds nothing to the story of the family itself and so is omitted here.

It is however relevant to mention briefly that the location of one part of the lands of Roger Fencott was referred to earlier that year, on 8th April 1741, in an Indenture<sup>15</sup> which itself did not involve the Fencott family, but which used the "...lands of Roger Fencott on the West..." , amongst others, as an aid to pinpointing the lands which were the subject of the Indenture.

In 1746 "*Mr Richd. Fencot*" served as Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden<sup>16</sup> and then in 1749 the Parish Vestry Meeting "*was held in the house of Mr William Fencott*".<sup>17</sup> Documentary evidence<sup>18</sup> suggests that William Fencott was not then a Churchwarden, as was later the case (1753), but it is reasonable to think that he was probably party to the proceedings of the meeting in some other capacity.

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<sup>10</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>11</sup> Reeves Notebook Number 10, page 29 and 'Leon Valley', page 130.

<sup>12</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>13</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>14</sup> History does not at present tell us what happened to Mr Sheward, or whether he was still alive but intentionally precluded from holding the land.

<sup>15</sup> HRO N41/2621.

<sup>16</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>17</sup> Reeves "The Leon Valley...", page 154.

<sup>18</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

The picture so far is one of quite a prosperous family, well involved in the affairs of the parish. Yet, at the period we have now reached, there were others of the same family name in the village who had fallen on hard times. In 1752 and 1753 two females named Fencott were 'on the parish'. In 1752 Margaret Fencott was receiving money as one of "*Ye. Poor*"<sup>19</sup> and then in 1753 "*...A smock for Mary Fencott 2s.*"<sup>20</sup> And yet, also in 1753 "*William Fencott for the house he lives in*"<sup>21</sup> served as Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden.

If these Fencotts who had fallen on hard times were of the same local 'stock' as those who at much the same time were involved in the care of the poor, as seems possible-if not indeed likely- then how many generations separated them before they had a common ancestor? Specific research may eventually allow me to answer this question, and to unravel the relationships of the various branches of the family in the parish, but in the meantime I will continue this chronological narration of the information about this family which has already come my way.

There is mention of a Doctor Fencott carrying out his duties in Eardisland in 1754:

*"In 1754.....to Doctor Fencott for Ale 5s. for going to Street with a girle that was big with child & taking her away 2s 6d."*<sup>22</sup>

Other entries in the Vestry Minutes in the Parish Book make it clear that Dr Fencott was based in Leominster, only coming to Eardisland when circumstances so demanded.

An entry in the Court Rolls of the Manor of Eardisland dated 16th April 1764 records that Mary Pritchard Spinster a Customary Tenant surrendered into the hands of the Lord of the Manor "One acre of Meadow" which was then granted to the use of Elizabeth the wife of William Fencott of the Parish of Eardisland.<sup>23</sup> What the relationship was, if any, between Mary Pritchard and Elizabeth Fencott, is not yet apparent.

The following year brings another Court Roll entry by which William Fencott of Eardisland and Mary his wife were admitted to various copyhold lands including parts of Shirfield and lands named as "Siffield" and "How Meadow".<sup>24</sup>

A little later, in 1774, there is further evidence of the comfortable status of this branch of the family. In that year William Fencott and William his son, both having abode and both owning freehold property in 'Eardesland', were thereby entitled to vote in the election of two Knights of the Shire between the 12th and 14th of October 1774.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>20</sup> Reeves Notebook number 9, page 151.

<sup>21</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>22</sup> Parish Book, HRO AJ32/58 via Reeves Notebook No.9, page 151.

<sup>23</sup> Holmlea Deeds.

<sup>24</sup> Exactly where this land was situated will be addressed in my separate Paper "Who? Where? When?".

<sup>25</sup> Hereford Library. Pilley Collection, item 54.

In 1781 three members of the family, John, William and "*William Fencott son*" were present together at the same Vestry Meeting.<sup>26</sup> More family information is to be found in an Indenture of 1785 between Wm Fencott<sup>27</sup> and Elizabeth his wife of the one part and John Fencott of Eardisland one of the sons of the said Wm and Eliz Fencott of the other part.....said Eliz Fencott now wanting to convey the said premises<sup>28</sup> to son John and his heirs.....by and with the consent of her husband said Wm Fencott.....; and so it went ahead, the land being transferred to her son, John Fencott.<sup>29</sup>

A further complication next arises in the person of a Thomas Fencott of Stanton Lacy, Salop in that the "*Capital Messuage called The Broome and its lands in the parishes of Eardisland and Pembridge*" by a lease dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1786 for 21 years at £240 per annum was granted by John Lord Viscount Bateman to Thomas Fencott of Stanton Lacy, Salop.<sup>30</sup> Had this Thomas been born here and gone away, made good and come back? Or was he related several generations earlier?.....or not at all? History does not currently relate.

By the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1787, all the other legal formalities (presumably) having been completed, the Copy portion of the Court Roll (Eardisland) is recorded as detailing the admission of John Fencott to the "said premises". This comes from a later Abstract of Title in "Barry's Deeds"; document 'D', where there is no other specific description of what comprised the 'premises', but circumstantially there is no doubt that this was the same one acre of land that was mentioned in 1764.

Whatever his background, by 1788 the Thomas Fencott who had leased The Broome from John Lord Viscount Bateman in 1786 was well integrated into the affairs of the parish, as recorded in the "Parish Book":<sup>31</sup> "*Thomas Fencott for the Broom 1788*" ...served as Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden.

Whoever actually kept the record which was the "Parish Book"<sup>32</sup> was at pains to avoid confusion between the various members of the Fencott family for, the next year (1789) we find in the same list<sup>33</sup>: "*John Fencott for his own*" serving as Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden. He was still undertaking those duties in 1790-1791.<sup>34</sup>

It seems that William Fencott had died by late in April 1788 for, dating to 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1788 it is recorded that John Fencott was released<sup>35</sup> by William Ruel and his wife Margaret from the 20/- annuity devised by William Fencott to Mary Ruel in 1784, for the term of her natural life.

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<sup>26</sup> Reeves Notebook No.9, page 147.

<sup>27</sup> Who had made a Will dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 1784 which is quoted in the deeds of 'The Brouch', Eardisland.

<sup>28</sup> The same one acre of meadow mentioned herein in 1764.

<sup>29</sup> Barry's Deeds, document 'D'.

<sup>30</sup> HRO G39/4/684.

<sup>31</sup> HRO AJ32/58.

<sup>32</sup> Which nowadays we would call the "Minutes"...of the Parish Vestry Meetings.

<sup>33</sup> HRO AJ32/58

<sup>34</sup> HRO AJ32/59.

<sup>35</sup> Deeds of 'The Brouch' Eardisland. Privately held.

