

Preece Family.

The earliest reference I have to this family dates to August 1637 when “*John Preece vid & 2 children*” and “*Richard Preece his wife and 2 children*” were receiving Poor Relief from the Parish in Eardisland.¹ By 1713 at least one branch of the family was in better circumstances since that year Thomas Preece served as Overseer and Churchwarden representing “*Mrs Wm Leinthalls Estate*”². It is possible that this was the Thomas Preece who died on the 1st June 1721, but this is not firmly established; indeed in 1729 a “*Thos. Preec for Court House*” carried out the same duties³. Was this perhaps father and son both named Thomas? The same source⁴ also has “*Jonathan Preec for Colcombs 174(1)*”.

Whatever the relationship of these members of the Preec(e) family, there can be no doubting that Thomas, the elder, died on the 1st June 1721. His tomb stone was found in the garden of a house adjacent to the churchyard by the new owner in July 1997. It remains in his possession, carefully preserved⁵, as can be seen from this photograph.



¹ HRO SR62.

² HRO AJ32/58.

³ HRO AJ32/58.

⁴ HRO AJ32/58.

⁵ No longer in the garden and open to all weathers.

An undated Glebe Terrier of about 1730-1750⁶ makes mention of some land of John Preece to the north of 'the Monk Court': the relationship, if any, of Thomas and John may become apparent as this and other Papers take form.

If the same man, John Preece was a customary tenant of the manor of Eardisland. As such, his signature appears on a Copyhold Admission of Roger Fencot, which is dated 1st January 1740.⁷ Also, he is cited in the Will of John Trumper (6th December 1740)⁸ as having acted in the same capacity regarding other lands in Eardisland, and he is further referred to, again in the same capacity, in an Indenture dated 8th April 1741 following the death of Joseph Trumper.⁹ It is evident that John Preece was reliable and of some standing in the community. He appears again in the records in 1757 when on 26th October, described as of [Brockleton?] Herefordshire, he transferred via the manorial Court of Eardisland to Job Juson and James Kinnersley, two other customary tenants, a tenement with Barn, Garden and the Appurtenances thereto.¹⁰

Following a Meeting of the Parish Vestry on 4th January 1749 Jane Preece was one of fifteen children *put out as parish apprentices*. She was to be apprenticed to *John Edwards for Fra: Stephens*. The arrangement was to continue until 1762.¹¹ I have made no attempt to relate Jane to any other members of the family mentioned in this Paper.

Another record details a Thos. Preece who either had "Poor" living in his house, or was himself poor and having his rent, at Languntley, paid for him. Included in *An Account of the Disbursements of William Sheward Overseer of y^e Poor of y^e Parish of Eardisland for y^e year 1756 is June 4 paid Tho^s Preec 0 : 5 : 6*¹² Later in the same source document, under the heading *Disburstments for the Poor of the parish of Eardisland for the Year 1758*¹³ *by Thomas Owens Overseer...is: 1759 Feb^r.2 gave Tho^s. Preeces of Languntley---0 : 5 : 0 and also in 1759 Apr^l.22 Tho^s Preec of Languntleys Rent 1 : 0 : 0 and Aug^t. 15 paid Tho^s Prese Son to Berry his father 0:18:0*

In 1762 the Parish Vestry allowed £40 to pay a Mr Preece for expenses connected with the Workhouse, for that year only. They were also to pay the Rent of the House and Barn.¹⁴ Whether this was the same Mr Preece referred to in 1757 is not established, but it seems not to be the same premises, there being no garden mentioned, although much could have changed in the intervening five years or so.

And so to 1767 when on the 21st October to a Court Baron of the Lord of the Manor (Thomas, Marquess of Bath) *"... came Samuel Nash and Sarah Morris Widow (Customary Tenants of the said Manor) the said Sarah being daughter of the said Samuel Nash and next customary heir of John Bayliss Sarah his wife and Ann their daughter all deceased also late customary Tenants of the said Manor) and brought*

⁶ HRO HD2/3/13.

⁷ Sheffield Papers, document 1, LH106.

⁸ HRO N41/2621.

⁹ HRO N41/2527.

¹⁰ Smith Deeds, item 1, LH10. [On March 6th the previous year, the Vestry Minutes record a payment of 3^d for an unspecified reason to *John Preec*].

¹¹ HRO AJ32/58.

¹² HRO AJ32/58.

¹³ Although this heading includes the date 1758, in the list there are several items clearly dated 1759.

¹⁴ HRO AJ32/58.

*into Court a certain Copy of Court Roll bearing date on or about the twenty first day of October one thousand seven hundred and sixty seven whereby it appeared to the Homage that William Edwards Gentleman and Thomas Preece (son and heir of Thomas Preece deceased ...did in open Court Surrender into the hands of the Lord of the said Manor ALL THAT Messuage or Tenement wherein Willaim Dickens formerly inhabited and dwelt with the Barn Garden and appurtenances thereto belonging situate lying and being in Eardisland aforesaid and bounded by lands....."*¹⁵ A quite detailed description of the position of the land then follows which I have noted to try to identify. There is no more information about the Preece family or the land they once held to be gleaned from this entry on the Court Roll. The land was transferred to Samuel Nash and Sarah Morris.

In the autumn of 1774 Richard Preece,¹⁶ whose *'place of abode'* was Leominster, owned freehold property in *'Eardesland'* and so was entitled to vote in the Election of two Knights of the Shire, which took place between the 12th and 14th of October 1774.¹⁷

No doubt other records will emerge, but at present the next mention of this family which I have dates to 1806 when:

*"1806...July the 19th Paid Thos. Preece for Mowing Wood in the Chh. Yard £0-1s-0d."*¹⁸

Exactly what he was paid for is not clear to me – I am open to suggestions.

Whilst this Paper is being written for the benefit of Local Historians rather than Family Historians, the Parish Register of Eardisland must not be ignored.....for the year 1810 shows just how complicated a task it would be to unravel the Preece family in this one parish, let alone elsewhere also. In 1810 on the eleventh (or fourteenth) of January Francis, son of Francis and Elizabeth Preece was baptised. On the twenty fifth of February of the same year William son of Thomas and Elizabeth Preece was baptised; and on the nineteenth of November that same year Thomas Preece aged fifteen was buried.

Another record, the Land Tax Assessment for 1817,¹⁹ further illustrates the diversity of this family:

Sarah Preece was assessed as Proprietor to pay £0-2-0d for a property which she occupied herself.

Thos Preece, Proprietor, was assessed to pay £0-8-0d for a property occupied by E Turberville.

Elizh. Preece, Proprietor, was assessed to pay £0-7-6d for a property occupied by John Baynham.

Sarah Preece died in 1823. She made a Will dated 24th March 1823²⁰ and died soon afterwards. In her Will she left to Minner²¹ Preece her daughter a House and Garden situated in the parish of Eardisland, and all Goods Chattels and Effects. She

¹⁵ Smith Deeds, item 1.LH10.

¹⁶ This is not a Family History Paper: no attempt has been made to establish what relation he was of the othe Preecees.

¹⁷ Hereford Library. PilleyCollection No.54.

¹⁸ HRO AJ32/59.

¹⁹ HRO A95/V/W/C/370.

²⁰ Barry's Deeds, document 'J'.

²¹ Elsewhere spelt "Mina".

signed by mark, as did one of the witnesses, James Preece.

Also dating to 1823 is evidence that the Preece family was involved in matters affecting the Poor and otherwise needy. Under the heading "Workhouse" is:

*"1823. 20 Sept. Pd Preece watt is left unpaid for rising stone for the Workhouse
on 7th January last 12s 6*
*21 Sept. Pd Prees in his Rate the remainder for lodging Prosser's Wife &
Children when he was in Gaill 1s 0*
Halling a load of Brick from Leominster to the Workhouse 7s 0²²

To be continued.

²² All from Reeves Notebook No.9, page 161.