

The Brewster Family

at

Burton Court.

1662 – 1822



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by

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

On the Cover:

Burton Court from *Dingley, Thomas "History from Marble". Circa 1683. Reprinted by the Camden Society in 1867.*

Within the text:

Photographs of portraits of the Brewsters as supplied by Hereford Museum and Art Gallery.

and

at the very end, the photograph of the portraits supplied to me some years ago by Mrs Helen Simpson, which first put in my mind the eventual format of this Paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
and
ABBREVIATIONS.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Corke, Wendy. | Unpublished Manuscript Notes of circa 2004. |
| Dingley, Thomas. | <i>History from Marble</i> . Circa 1683. Reprinted by the Camden Society in 1867. |
| HRO | Herefordshire Record Office. |
| IGI | International Genealogical Index. Administered by the Mormon Church, more correctly 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints'. |
| Morgan, F.C. | <i>Dr William Brewster of Hereford (1665-1715)</i> : printed in "Medical History", Volume iii, Number 2, April 1964. and <i>Portrait Notes</i> : being notes which he and Miss Penelope Morgan compiled for Mrs Helen Simpson of Burton Court. Date unknown. |
| PCC Wills | Perogative Court of Canterbury – Wills: via British Record Society Ltd., 1948. |
| Reeves Notebooks. | Reeves Norman C. Some of his Notebooks held locally. Others are at HRO, but if I use those I quote the HRO reference. They all date to circa 1975. |
| Ripley,P and Jurica,J (Eds.), | <i>Registers of the Freemen of the City of Gloucester 1641-1838</i> : Gloucester Record Series 4, 1991. |
| VCH | Victoria County History series: Gloucestershire, Volume 4. |
| WFC | Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club. |

The Brewster Family at Burton Court.

John Brewster purchased Burton Court at the beginning of April 1662:

*“(1&2nd Apr. 1662) By Indentures of this date (Reciting that the above premises had survived to Henry Hyet Gent & Samuel Dobyns) & also by a fine Henry Hyet the elder Esq Henry Hyet the younger his Son & Heir apparent & Elizabeth his wife & Samuel Dobyns in consideration of £1800 convey the Capital Messuage of Burton Court & the lands etc. to John Brewster Gent his Heirs and Aps.”*¹

John Brewster was not the first of his branch of the Brewster family to bear the name ‘John’ nor was he to be the last. However, for the purposes of this Paper I will refer to him as ‘John (i)’.

Not a local man, John (i) was from a Gloucester family. He was baptised on the 17th November 1611 at the parish church of St Michael, in the City of Gloucester.²

He was a son of another John Brewster who was a Malster by trade,³ Sheriff of Gloucester in 1612 and 1617, and Mayor of the City of Gloucester in 1632.⁴ This John was said to be dead by the time his son was admitted as a Freeman of the city of Gloucester in 1649.⁵

John (i) never knew his paternal grandfather, yet another ‘John’, buried on 11th November 1610,⁶ but his paternal grandmother, Katherine, lived until our John (i) was nearing his sixth birthday; she died in mid-July 1617.⁷

From all this it can be assumed that John (i) grew up in a settled, prosperous environment and received a good education. He had, at least, three younger sisters and a younger brother,⁸ but nothing I have seen about them suggests any connection with Herefordshire.

By the time his father died circa 1649, John (i) was about thirty eight years old. Both of them had survived the major military turmoils of the Civil War period, but of any involvement they may have had in it we know nothing; nor do we know anything of their political affiliations, Royalist or otherwise.

And so to Burton Court.

As already detailed at the start of this Paper, John (i) Brewster purchased the ‘Capital Messuage of Burton Court & the lands etc.’ at the beginning of April 1662.

¹ HRO BC79/17/7, f.66.

² Morgan, F.C. “Dr William Brewster of Hereford (1665-1715)”: printed in “Medical History”, Volume iii, Number 2, April 1964.

³ VCH Gloucestershire, Volume 4, page 377.

⁴ Morgan, F.C.; as footnote number one above.

⁵ P.Ripley and J.Jurica (eds.), Registers of the Freemen of the City of Gloucester 1641-1838 (Gloucester Record Series 4, 1991, pages 7-8).

⁶ A Furrier by trade, this John was Sheriff of Gloucester in 1594 and 1598, and Mayor in 1604. [Morgan F.C., as above].

⁷ Morgan.

⁸ Morgan.

About the same time he married Margaret.⁹ Two sons resulted, William and John. The only reference to John of which I am aware at present dates to 1671 when he was “*to go to school*”.¹⁰ It was clearly family tradition to name the first son ‘John’ and there is nothing to suggest that John(i) went against this. Thus if the John who was to go to school was indeed the older brother, then the date of the other brother, William’s baptism, 9th November 1665,¹¹ makes it unlikely that William’s brother John was born after, say, May 1664. I have no information about him after 1671.

William, on the other hand, is well known to history, being the ‘Dr William Brewster of Hereford 1665-1715’ written about by F.C.Morgan in ‘Medical History’ Volume viii. Number 2, in April 1964.¹² With such an authoritative Paper available there is no point in me reiterating here Dr William’s life after he left Burton, particularly so because I intend to restrict this Paper to the Brewster family at Burton Court. Morgan looks, expertly, at the wider picture of Dr William’s life.

In the local context, then, I can record that William Brewster, son of John (i) and Margaret his wife, was baptised at Eardisland on the 9th November 1665.¹³ William was only three and a half years old when his mother died. She was buried at Eardisland on the 18th April 1669.¹⁴

Thus John (i) in spring 1669 found himself a widower, aged 58, with sons three and a half years old (William) and probably about five (John). He did not wait long before finding comfort for himself and a new mother for John and William. If everything took place with the correctness the Church would have expected, he married Blanche daughter of Humphry Howarth Esq.¹⁵ at the latest by the end of July 1670. Their daughter, Elizabeth, was baptised at Eardisland on the 27th April 1671.¹⁶

The same source which records the maiden name of his second wife¹⁷ also makes mention of: “...*Settlement of Burton subseqt. to the Marr’e dated 4&5 Oct. 1671...*”¹⁸ This I take to mean that John (i) settled Burton ie. the Court building and the manor,¹⁹ on his new wife Blanche within eighteen months of the birth of their first child, a daughter. Why?²⁰

He was about sixty years old. I do not know how old she was but, judging from what is to come later in this Paper, she must have been quite a lot younger than he was. Of his two

⁹ Maiden surname and place of marriage unknown.

¹⁰ HRO BM81/2/4.

¹¹ Eardisland Parish Register via HRO BM81/2/4.

¹² Morgan does not mention William’s brother John, indeed he says that William was the only son of John (i) and Margaret.

¹³ Eardisland Parish Register via HRO BM81/2/4.

¹⁴ WFC. December 1963.

¹⁵ HRO BC79/17/7/66.

¹⁶ Parish Register via HRO BM81/2/4.

¹⁷ The only one to do so.

¹⁸ HRO BC79/17/7/66.

¹⁹ Which explains why neither was mentioned in his Will in 1684.

²⁰ With no knowledge of the wording of the Settlement itself it would be foolish to surmise-but the then circumstances at Burton Court provide a useful interim summary.

sons by his first marriage John, probably the older son, was still alive and presumably in good health when, on the 22nd June that same year (1671) he was detailed in a letter as: “...to go to school...”²¹ The other son, William, was six years old and although nothing is recorded about his general health, he was later described by one of the Overseers of his Will as “...middle-sized, lame and stump-footed...”²² His later academic achievements suggest that as he grew up he may thereby have been obliged to stay indoors and study rather than learn and enjoy the outdoor pursuits of the landed gentry of that period.

Three more children of John (i)’s second marriage followed; Blanche, baptised at Eardisland on the 28th May 1672,²³ Susanna, baptised at Eardisland on the 28th April 1673²⁴ and lastly Benjamin, baptised at Eardisland on the 15th December 1674. One of the pedigrees which I have seen shows that Susanna died as a child²⁵ but that Elizabeth, Blanche and Benjamin married and produced families. But this can not be correct : she (Susanna) is mentioned as a beneficiary of the Will of John (i) in 1683.²⁶

After Benjamin’s baptism in December 1674 I have no information until, nearly nine years later, John (i) made a Will, dated the 14th August 1683.

But what were the circumstances at Burton Court during the intervening years?

In December 1674 young John, if still alive was, say ten years old, and would have been going to school, as likely in Hereford as in Eardisland. The same applies to William, then aged nine, although when he started at the free [Cathedral] school in Hereford is not on record. It is, however, known that he was educated there.²⁷ It must be assumed that they boarded in Hereford, a daily journey at that time would not have been a viable option.²⁸ As for the girls at the same date, Elizabeth was three and a half; Blanche two and a half and Susanna one and a half years old. Benjamin was newly arrived and no doubt in his cot, and quite probably noisy!

Six children then, particularly so in the school holidays, and there is no evidence to suggest other than a normal, predominantly happy, and settled childhood for all of them. However, all was not without sadness for John junior disappears from the records and it must be assumed that he died.

And so the years passed.

²¹ HRO CF58/2. This is the only reference to this young John of which I am aware.

²² Morgan.

²³ HRO BM81/1/11.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ HRO CF58/-.

²⁶ This Will is dealt with later in this Paper.

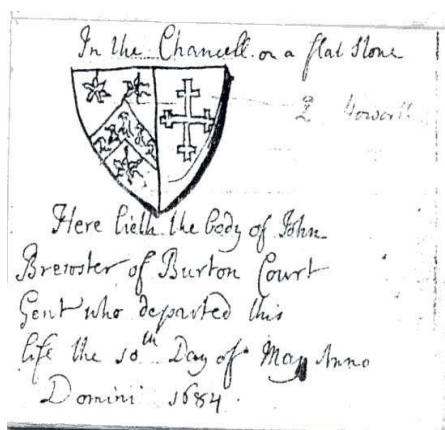
²⁷ Morgan.

²⁸ As was still the case in the mid-1850s when George Yeld boarded whilst attending the same school. The Yeld family lived at Twyford Farm, Eardisland.

In mid-August 1683 John (i) was three months short of his seventy second birthday when something prompted him to make a Will, which is dated 14th August 1683.²⁹ This is a lengthy document which indicates, mentioned as beneficiaries, that two of his sisters were still alive, one of them living in Gloucester; and he had both a brother and a cousin named Samuel. The main beneficiaries were his surviving sons William and his half-brother Benjamin and Benjamin's mother, John's second wife, Blanche, who was sole Executrix. Burton Court itself and the Manor of Burton are not mentioned, having already, soon after the birth of their first daughter several years earlier, been settled on his second wife, Blanche. Three daughters also benefited under his Will; Elizabeth, Hannah and Susanna are named. Of these Elizabeth and Susanna appear on the various pedigrees which I have seen, but this is the first (and completely authoritative) mention of Hannah. Furthermore the pedigrees all mention a daughter Blanch (daughter of John (i) and Blanche) and she is shown as being alive in 1683. Was Hannah her name in the close family circle? If not there is a major discrepancy here.

None of the other bequests are relevant to the family at Burton Court.

John (i) Brewster died on the 10th May 1684³⁰ and was buried two days later in Eardisland Parish Church. In his Will he specified that he wished to be buried "*...in the church of Eardisland near unto the grave of my late wife Margaret near the chancell...*" His inscribed tomb slab survives; but whether in its original position is open to doubt. Whilst the inscription is well and reliably recorded³¹, it has since 1898 become worn smooth and very little trace of the inscription remains. It was first drawn, and the inscription recorded, circa 1712.³²



Tombstone of John Brewster. Died 1684.

The heraldic arms on the left (as seen) are Brewster, those on the right relate to the family of his second wife 'Howarth', although I have no record that she was buried here, nor indeed of the date of her death.

²⁹ PCC Wills. British Record Society Ltd. 1948. Volume (x). 1684. Folio 142.

³⁰ HRO BM81/1/19.

³¹ HRO BM81/1/19. Which is dated in the writer's own hand to 28th September 1898.

³² HRO CF50/114.

John (i)'s widow, Blanche, remarried on the 29th July 1686, here in Eardisland.³³ Her second husband was Thomas de la Hay of Urishay Castle, Peterchurch, a widower.³⁴ But after the festivities were over and the guests dispersed, the practicalities of the situation were not straightforward.

Blanche was already, under a Deed of Settlement, possessed of Burton Court and the lands associated with it: indeed she was Lady of the Manor of Burton. She had also benefited in other ways under the Will of her late husband, John Brewster. Whilst I have no details, it is reasonable to consider that her new husband, Thomas de la Hay, may well have had similar assets at Urishay. As to his close family I know nothing. But Blanche had at least one stepson of her marriage to John Brewster, William, by then about twenty years old and a commoner at St John's College Oxford since 1683.³⁵ But when not up at Oxford, Burton Court was still his home. This is evidenced by a letter to him at Burton Court dated the 9th December 1688.³⁶ Of Blanche's own children by John (i) Brewster, all four were probably at Burton Court. Elizabeth was fourteen (described as 'of Burton Court' when she married in 1690 or 1696³⁷) Blanche junior was thirteen, Susanna/Hannah was twelve, and Benjamin ten and a half years old.

Where then did Thomas and Blanche set up house after their marriage? Urishay or Burton?

At present I would say Burton Court because of the circumstances I have already recounted about William and Elizabeth and an additional fact that the marriage of Thomas and Blanche was quite soon blessed by the birth of a daughter, Sarah, who was baptised at Eardisland on the 23rd December 1688.

However, this should not be taken as proof. The complete absence of references to Urishay, and indeed to Thomas and Blanche themselves after the baptism of Sarah, may well be because neither I, nor to the best of my knowledge the others who have worked on this over the years, have done any work on the Urishay/Peterchurch end of the connection.

The spotlight now falls upon Benjamin. In 1686³⁸ a portrait of him was painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller.³⁹ He was about twelve years old:



Benjamin Brewster.

³³ Parish Register via HRO BM81/2/4.

³⁴ WFC December 1963 via Morgan : also HRO BM81/1/11.

³⁵ Morgan.

³⁶ Morgan.

³⁷ Sources differ as to who she married and only one, Wendy Corke, mentions these dates. The other source is HRO BM 81/2/4.

³⁸ HRO CF58/-.

³⁹ Morgan-Portrait Notes.

Perhaps about the same time, although not dated, nor attributed to any artist, his older sister, Blanche, was also painted:



Blanche Brewster.

and again ‘artist unknown’ and not dated, his oldest sister, Elizabeth:



Elizabeth Brewster.

Then, either in 1690 or 1696, Blanche’s eldest daughter, Elizabeth, married; impliedly here in Eardisland, as already recounted.

From 1697 all references to William Brewster describe him as “of Hereford” and as Doctor [usually written ‘Dr’] William Brewster.⁴⁰ He practised and lived in Hereford thereafter. There are no further references to him in connection with Burton Court. This portrait shows him in the robes of a Doctor of Medicine⁴¹ and may well have been commissioned to mark his final qualification that year. It is not dated nor is the artist known:



William Brewster.

⁴⁰ Morgan; and HRO, LC Deeds 3594.

⁴¹ Morgan.

In 1698, dated to the 7th May, Benjamin's mother Blanche, by then widowed for the second time, settled Burton Court and the lands etc (ie. The Manor of Burton) on Benjamin, who later that year, on the 11th August⁴², married in Leominster. His bride was Ann, eldest daughter of Ann Whittington, widow.

Wherever it was that the various members of the Brewster family had been living between Blanche's second marriage in July 1686 and Benjamin marrying (as just recounted), there is no doubt that Benjamin, now Lord of the Manor of Burton, aged about twenty three, established himself and his new wife at Burton Court.

Their first child, who they named John, was baptised at Eardisland on the 2nd March 1700/1.⁴³ A second son, William, was baptised on the 21st December 1702.⁴⁴

In addition to his family responsibilities, running Burton Court, and his obligations as Lord of the Manor of Burton, Benjamin was involved in other ways in the administration of the parish. For example, in 1703 "*Mr Ben Brewster for ye Court of Burton*" served as Overseer of the Poor and Churchwarden.⁴⁵

A third son was born to Benjamin and Ann, who they named Thomas. He was baptised at Eardisland on the 26th September 1705.⁴⁶ He was followed by their last child, a daughter, Anna, baptised at Eardisland on the 27th July 1707.⁴⁷ However, this happy sequence of births had been interrupted in 1706 by the death of their second son, William. He was buried on the 9th October 1706.

Whilst he had been living in Hereford since circa 1697, it is nevertheless appropriate to record the death of William Brewster M.D. on the 4th June 1715, aged 50. He was buried in Hereford Cathedral.⁴⁸

By 1718 Benjamin was aged about forty three⁴⁹ when again he sat for a portrait painter, who has not been identified.⁵⁰ This was the result of the sitting(s):



Benjamin Brewster.

⁴² IGI.

⁴³ HRO BM81/1/11.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ HRO AJ32/58.

⁴⁶ HRO BM81/1/11.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Other sources have 'Anne'.

⁴⁸ Monumental Inscription in Hereford Cathedral via HRO BM81/2/4.

⁴⁹ Morgan in his Portrait Notes quotes his age as 45.

⁵⁰ HRO CF58/-.

The same source⁵¹ has it that, also in 1718, a portrait was painted of “*Anne w. of Benjn. Brewster AET 45 1718.*” The arithmetic of this is correct as evidenced by a Monumental Inscription to her at Eardisland.⁵² Yet Morgan in his Portrait Notes has “*Painted in 1714. Aet 45...* ”.



Anne wife of Benjamin Brewster.

I am not aware of any particular reason why Benjamin and his wife should have had their portraits painted that year. Their three surviving children, John, Thomas and Anna/Anne were respectively about eighteen, thirteen and eleven years old and I have seen nothing to suggest other than a settled family situation at Burton Court over the years since the death of their brother, William, in 1706.

Records indicate that the twenty first birthday of John (ii), son of Benjamin and Ann, may have been the occasion of a major celebration. Dated 22nd March 1721 both Benjamin and Ann were party to a Settlement in favour of John (ii). The Settlement document itself is not extant but it is referred to in notes dated 1765 prepared for John (ii) and copied by his brother Thomas.⁵³

But in 1721 Benjamin and his wife Anne were about forty seven and forty eight years old respectively and there is nothing I am aware of to suggest that they were not in normal good health, nor anything to suggest that he and Anne moved away from Burton.

The terms and effect of the Settlement remain unknown, but part at least of the answer may lie in the fact that the following year, 1722, John (ii) married at Hereford St Owen's on 8th June, by licence of the Bishop.⁵⁴ His bride was Margaret Clayton of St Owen, Hereford “*both aged about 21 yrs*”⁵⁵. Both Reeves⁵⁶ and Duncumb⁵⁷ have it that she was daughter of Robert Clayton of Bullingham, Mayor of Hereford. It is also recorded,⁵⁸ again in

⁵¹ HRO CF58/-.

⁵² HRO BM81/2/4.

⁵³ HRO BC79/17/7/66.

⁵⁴ Benjamin's Will makes no mention of Burton Court and the Manor of Burton which may indicate that both were the subject of this Settlement. Circumstances suggest that there may have been conditions of timing and/or other circumstances attached to the Settlement.

⁵⁵ Morgan.

⁵⁶ Notebook No.10.

⁵⁷ Manuscript Notes in Hereford Library.

⁵⁸ Morgan.

1722, that a son was born to them, John, known hereinafter as John (iii), baptised at St Owen, Hereford.⁵⁹

The following year a portrait of John (ii) was commissioned from an unidentified artist. He was about twenty two years old:



John (ii) Brewster.

1723 is also the date of a portrait of Anne, daughter of Benjamin and Anne, John's younger sister. She was about sixteen years old:



Anne Brewster.

Dated the 30th November 1732 Benjamin Brewster made a Will. It is not, however, extant. The only reason we know of its existence is that it is referred to in his later Will of 1734 which superceded it. He was then (1732) about fifty eight years old. I have no information which suggests the circumstances which led him to make either of these Wills.

⁵⁹ Another child followed, Clayton, baptised on the 5th May 1723, also at St Owen Hereford. He was followed by others, but, it being my intention to restrict myself to the Brewsters at Burton Court, I will not explore here the differing records of the names and dates of these other children.

In “*about 1733-4*” Thomas, youngest son of Benjamin and Anne, married a “*lady with about a £14500 fortune.*”⁶⁰ She is not named in any of the sources which I am using. Thomas was then about twenty eight years old, a Doctor of Medicine, practising in Bath. An undated, unattributed portrait of him survives:



Thomas Brewster.

At the beginning of 1734, on 16th January, Benjamin signed what turned out to be his final Will.⁶¹ Burton Court and the Manor of Burton are not mentioned, presumably having been the subject of the Settlement in favour of his eldest son, John (ii), in March 1721, as already recounted.

After stipulating where in the churchyard at Eardisland he wished to be buried, and after a bequest to the poor of the parish and stipulating who was to administer it, he turns to looking after his family.

To his wife Anne he bequeaths all his household goods and plate etc. for life provided that she continues a widow and lives at Burton Court. She also is to have the cash sum of fifty pounds.

His bequest to his son Thomas is next, and is best and most easily dealt with by quoting it almost in full: “*Item I give and bequeath to my son Thomas Brewster Doctor in physick, the summe of two hundred guineas by way of a fee, as I never yet having had any prescription from a Dr. (and do now exceed 60) but A Chearfull & good humoured glass not but that..... have left him more but that his education was very chargeable to me as costing me (as my yearly accounts shew) above A thousand pounds & now particularly, that he was lately married to a young lady with fourteen thand [sic] & five hundred pounds fortune, as he himself wrote me word, so that he now stands in need of no poor legacy from me. I therefore having but two sons (wch. are all my living children) am willing to assist the weakest side, wch is my son John & his children: & tis not thro’ any unkindness towards my son Thomas, that he receives no more from me, for that I solemnly protest before God & the world, I bear my sd son Thomas A sincere love & affection, as I hope for mercy in the next world & did make him (before his great success in marriage) my sole executor, when I published my last will (before this) dated 30 Nov. 1732.....*”

⁶⁰ HRO BM81/2/4.

⁶¹ HRO BM81/1/14.

He then moves on to bequests to his (then) four grandchildren and after that his three sisters⁶² receive five guineas each: to his three neices three guineas each. His nephew John Gwyn is then singled out for special mention: *“Item I give and bequeath to my hopefull Nephew Mr John Gwyn my best hat, best Wig, best Coat, with plate buttons (wch will serve him to melt at the Alehouse) best Wastcoat, best britches, best pair of shoes, best pair of stockings, & two best shirts, & also two dozen of my best bottled beer, two dozen of the best glazed pipes, and two pounds of the best black-horse tobacco, and also my great protestant jug cal’d Conscience. All these to be delivered to him in A weekes time after I am earthed. Tis needless to leave him money, because tis his utter aversion to keep any.”*

Who then was this nephew, John Gwyn, who had so displeased his uncle Benjamin?

Earlier in this Paper I briefly mentioned the marriage in 1690 or 1696 of Elizabeth, Benjamin’s eldest sister. Of the two sources I detailed then, one, Wendy Corke’s manuscript notes, have it that Elizabeth married “c.1690 Thomas Gwyn of New Radnor...” They would have produced the nephew who Benjamin was so at pains to embarrass in his Will. The other source states that she married a “.....Mason”.

The Will continues with small bequests to two ‘*day labourers*’, and two godsons, and lastly his eldest son “*Mr John Brewster Attorney at Law*” who was to be sole Executor and to receive “*All the rest & residue of my personal estate goods & chattels whatsoever...*”⁶³

By the fifteenth of June 1736 Benjamin had a, presumably recently new, grandson, also named Benjamin, son of Thomas and his wealthy wife. Benjamin altered his Will by Codicil of that date. The boy was to have the sum of fifty guineas, to be paid to him when he attained the age of fifteen.⁶⁴ Years later a portrait of Benjamin (junior) was painted. It is undated and the artist is unknown:



Benjamin Brewster (Junior).

⁶² One, Sarah, a half-sister, being the only child of Benjamin’s mother Blanche by her second husband Thomas de la Hay.

⁶³ He had previously benefited from a Deed of Settlement in 1721 which, if it had not already done so, must have on his father’s death given him Burton Court and the manor of Burton.

⁶⁴ HRO BM81/2/4.

In 1737 another Brewster portrait was painted, artist unknown. The subject was John (iii), son of John (ii) and Margaret; by then he was about fifteen years old:



John (iii) Brewster.

That same year, 1737, Benjamin died. His burial place was recorded in 1898: *“In the yard on a large stone:- Here lieth the body of Benjamin Brewster Gent (late of Burton Court) who died March 12th 1737 Aged 63 years”*.⁶⁵

The same tombstone, either no longer there or no longer legible, is recorded as detailing that Benjamin’s wife, Ann, died on the 17th September 1739 aged 66 years. However, another source⁶⁶ has it that she died the same year as her husband and was buried on 1st October 1737.

From the early 1740s there is more evidence than before of the involvement of the Brewster family in the affairs of the parish. I doubt if this evidences greater activity on the part of Johns (ii) and (iii) than John (i) and Benjamin, simply that more written material has survived than from the earlier years. Business matters also took them to Hereford from time to time.

By 1761 John (ii) was aged about sixty, his son John (iii) about thirty nine, and John (iii) was to some extent, if not entirely, taking over as the lord of the manor.⁶⁷ John (iii) was also by then a married man, his wife being Anne. Their first child was baptised Margaret at Eardisland on the 24th April 1762, the second, John, on the 27th October 1767. He died in early infancy and was buried at Eardisland on the 3rd March 1768. Happier times returned when on the 24th June 1771 their second daughter, Anna, was baptised. But no further sons were to follow. She was their last child.⁶⁸

In later life Margaret (bapt.1762) may have had some memory of the death of her infant brother who would have been John (iv). She was about six years old at the time. Her sister Anna’s arrival three years later she may well have remembered clearly. Margaret was about twelve when her grandfather John (ii) died on the 26th February 1774, aged seventy three.⁶⁹ He was buried in Eardisland churchyard on the 1st March 1774.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ HRO BM81/1/19.

⁶⁶ Morgan-Portrait Notes.

⁶⁷ HRO CF58/-.

⁶⁸ Morgan.

⁶⁹ HRO BM81/1/19.

⁷⁰ Morgan.

John (iii) was now left as the only male member of the Brewster family at Burton Court. With him were his mother, Margaret, about seventy four years old; his wife Anne, about forty four and daughters Margaret, about twelve and Anna about three. He himself was about fifty two years old.

Apart from sundry business matters I have no records relating to the family itself until, possibly in 1782, Margaret, by then about twenty, married William Evans, son of Arthur Evans of Buckland in the parish of Docklow.⁷¹ An undated portrait of Margaret exists, artist unknown:



Margaret Brewster.

Margaret senior, widow of John (ii), died on the eleventh of July 1787 aged eighty and was buried in Eardisland churchyard.⁷² The same tombstone had detail, only partly legible in 1898, of the death of Thomas Brewster of Hereford in January 1790. If this was Thomas M.D., the younger brother of John (ii) who married the wealthy lady, he was about eighty five years old. He may have been living at Burton Court for some years if he was the same Thomas Brewster who is to be found as ‘Steward’ of the Manor of Burton in December 1779: a deputy was actually running the proceedings.⁷³ In the record of the following court, not held until the 29th April 1790, he is not mentioned; the Steward being ‘Benjamin Fallowes the younger, Gent.’

John (iii) lost another lady from the close relatives in his household at Burton Court in 1796 when, on the 17th November, his wife Anne died at the age of sixty six.⁷⁴ Only John himself, now aged about seventy four, and his younger daughter, Anna, about twenty five, remained in residence.

This continued to be the case until John (iii) died on the 30th November 1804 at the age of seventy two.⁷⁵ His funeral was on the 3rd December.⁷⁶

⁷¹ HRO CF58/-.

⁷² HRO BM81/1/19.

⁷³ HRO CF58/-.

⁷⁴ HRO BM81/2/4.

⁷⁵ HRO BM81/1/19 and the still existing Monumental Inscription on the north wall of the chancel in Eardisland church.

⁷⁶ Eardisland parish register via Morgan.

Left as joint heiresses were his daughter Margaret (married to William Evans and not then in residence at Burton Court), and her younger sister Anna, a spinster, now the sole resident Brewster at Burton Court.

Early the following year Anna, aged about thirty four, made a Will: it is dated the 14th February 1805.⁷⁷ She described herself as “*of Burton Court...*” and devised to Trustees her half share of “*...the Manor of Burton and Mansion House of Burton...*” and all other lands held by her late father. The trustees were to pay to her sister all rents and profits of her legal estate in such a way that they were absolutely beyond the control of her then husband or any future husband and after the death of her sister all was to go to Anna’s two nieces, Mary Anne Evans and Elizabeth Evans. Thus was the estate to remain as one entity, (her sister already owning the other half in her own right), which is what in fact happened.

But keeping her sister’s husband away from her, Anna’s, half share of Burton Court after her death did not remove him from the scene during her, and her sister’s lifetimes. On marriage his wife’s possessions immediately became his and so we find that the first Court after the death of John (iii) was held at Burton on the 8th July 1806 by “*William Evans and Anne Brewster spinster Lord and Lady of the said Manor.*”⁷⁸

In 1808 Anne/Anna wrote a codicil to her Will⁷⁹ which she signed “*Anna Brewster Burton Court March 5th 1808*”. In this she first makes cash bequests to her (named) servants and family retainers at Burton Court, followed by other local people; then to her two goddaughters followed by “*...I request Mr William Evans will accept 200£ [sic] as a mark of my regard...*”. Two very personal requests follow: “*I request I may be buried in every respect as my dearest father was & that I may be placed by him in the Vault at Eardisland*”⁸⁰ “*I request no old Horse or Dog belonging to me is either given or lent out but shot -...*” Lastly: “*...all the residue & Remainder of my Personal Estate I give and bequeath the interest thereof to my much beloved sister Margaret Evans for her life free from the control or Engagements of her husband and after her decease I direct the principal sum to be paid to my two nieces Mary Anne and Elizabeth Evans equally to be divided between them...*”

Whether or not she was seriously ill when she made this codicil is not known to me; but if so she survived and we find record of Court being held at Burton, again in her name with that of William Evans, on the 29th December 1810. But by then she may well have been ill. She died towards the end of January 1811 and was buried in Eardisland church on the 29th of that month. She was thirty nine years old.⁸¹

By the terms of Anna’s Will her sister Margaret now inherited Anna’s half share of the Manor of Burton and the ‘Mansion’, to be held in her own right: Margaret’s own half share

⁷⁷ HRO N41/2630.

⁷⁸ HRO CF58/-.

⁷⁹ HRO N41/2630.

⁸⁰ This could be taken to suggest the re-use of the much earlier family vault where John (i) was buried in 1684. It will be remembered that Benjamin specified in his Will in 1734 where in the churchyard he was to be buried and that the Monumental Inscriptions records indicate that several others of the close family were buried there also; not in the church itself.

⁸¹ HRO – Eardisland Parish Register.

was held by her husband William Evans ‘jure uxoris’; and so it was that the next court held, albeit some years later on the 22nd November 1817, finds ‘*William Evans Esq and Margaret his wife Lord and Lady of the said Manor*’ holding court at Burton.⁸²

The next court held was nearly two years later on the 15th July 1819 when they are again recorded holding court together, but that proved to be the last time;⁸³ he died on the 19th May 1822,⁸⁴ she ‘...*died on the 9 day of September 1822 in the 61 year of her age.*’⁸⁵

And so, with the death of Margaret Brewster, for several years Margaret Evans, ended the Brewster years at Burton Court.



Photograph of the portraits at Burton Court.

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⁸² HRO CF58/-.

⁸³ No further courts were held until the sixteenth of November 1826 when “*Mary Ann Evans and Elizabeth Evans, Spinsters...*” were ... “*Ladies of the said Manor.*”

⁸⁴ Morgan.

⁸⁵ HRO BM81/1/19.

Because of the insertions on the first four pages of this version, all these index page numbers need to be increased by four before referring to them.

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