

The Plants: farmers of Mucklestone, Maer, Eccleshall and beyond

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I became involved with the Plant surname by accident whilst researching my paternal grandmother's family; the Addisons. I never thought for one minute that I would spend so much time or become so utterly engrossed and frustrated in a distant family line. Given so many Addison-Plant marriages and Plant-Plant intermarriages, involving several apparently close relatives, it is a wonder that there weren't any family genetic deformities; or, maybe there were? Mentioned below are just a few of these marriages.

Addison-Plant

My 3x paternal grandmother was Eliza Addison born 1842 in Eccleshall in Staffordshire, the daughter of Ann, a single woman of Walton. Ann had another illegitimate daughter Eliza Plant Addison, 3 years before my great great grandmother was born. On further investigation I found that their mother, Ann, was born 1789 in Chebsey and a reasonable conclusion I think is that her first daughter at least was fathered by a Plant. I then found that Ann's brother William had a daughter called Sarah born 1828 in Walton, Eccleshall, who marries a Plant; William Plant born about 1828, a blacksmith of Stafford. Sarah and William sire many children one of whom is Catherine (Kate) born 1856 Gnosall. Catherine is a witness at my 3x grandmother's second wedding in Shifnal, Salop, in 1898.

Ann's cousin Thomas Addison born 1779 in Walton, Eccleshall, marries Mary Plant in Maer in 1829. Mary Plant was born 1778 in Maer, the daughter of James and Mary Plant.

Ann's Uncle, Thomas Addison (a farmer) born 1746 in Maer married Alice Plant in 1777 Eccleshall. Alice was the daughter of James Plant and Alice Cornes. On Thomas' death in 1788 he leaves in his will of the same date all that he owns in trust to James Plant of the Mill House, Maer, in trust for his wife Alice and children. James Plant was Alice's brother born 1750 in Maer, both being the children of James Plant born 1717 in Mucklestone and Alice Cornes. When Alice's brother James dies in 1818 "late of Sidaway Mill House" Maer *sic*. Sidway, he names John Plant of Western Mill, Norbury, and Samuel Plant of Bearstone, Salop, both farmers as his Executors.

The grandfather of Thomas Addison born 1746 Maer was William Addison born 1669 in Maer. He married Elizabeth Plant 1695 in Swynnerton. I think that Elizabeth Plant was born in Swynnerton about 1670 but this I shall never know for sure as there are gaps in the register around that time.

Some Plants

James Plant born 1717 was Church Warden in Maer in 1750 and the son of John Plant born about 1680 I think, who married Elizabeth Leversage in 1703 at Mucklestone. I cannot find a baptism for a John born about 1680 but I know he had a brother called James from one of the wills (see below). I also suspect he had a brother called William and a brother called Samuel, but again, I cannot find or prove this. John died in 1742 Bearstone, Mucklestone.

The Plant wills have been extremely interesting and more research is needed at the Staffordshire Records Office as there are documents there that I would like to see regarding leases of land. In the meantime, here are details of some of the interesting Plant wills (which I later found on http://plant.one-name.net/plant_wills.html)

John Plant of Bearstone, will of 1742

Born: about 1680

Married: Elizabeth Leversage 23/10/1703 in Mucklestone

Buried: 15/04/1742 of Bearstone, Mucklestone

John Plant was a farmer of Bearstone and he and his wife Elizabeth had several children. In his will of 1742, he leaves all his quick stock and household goods to his "loving wife Elizabeth" and his living which he possesses of Rowland Coton Esq. in Bearstone for the use of her natural life. "And at her my said wife's desire it is my will and mind that my loving son William Plant shall have and enjoy the said living to him during the term of the said lease" He leaves money to his children: James, Edward, John, Thomas, Samuel, Ellin and Elizabeth.

Signed John Plant

Witnesses Mary Cardall (her mark with an x) and signed William Birchall. (William Birchall was a writing master of Drayton).

Notes: Poor John ends up leaving more debts than assets and one of the appraisers of the inventory is his wife's brother, William Leversage. His debtors list says he owes money to William Plant and Elizabeth Plant. I am not sure who these are but wonder if William is either his brother or another close relative, and perhaps Elizabeth is his wife.

The lease he mentions held of Rowland Cotton Esq: 1675-1753 of Etwell, Derbyshire and Bellaport, Salop which was previously part of Bearstone. Rowland Cotton inherited estates in Shropshire. There is a document in the Staffordshire Record Office that may relate to this, D1798/HM Aston/1/21 AND /20 concerning fines in Maer and Ashley.

James Plant, yeoman farmer of Sidway Mill House, Maer

Bapt: 17/01/1717 Mucklestone, son of John and Elizabeth Plant of Bearstone

Married: Alice Cornes 31/7/1749 Maer

Buried: 28/02/1773 Maer

James Plant was a yeoman farmer of Maer and Church Warden there in 1750.

In his will of 1772 "In the name of God Amen. I James Plant of Sidway Mill House in the parish of Mair in the County of Stafford Yeoman....." He mentions his children: Josiah, John and Alice. He leaves a piece of land called Cornsey's Croft in Maer and his real estate to his wife Alice. He leaves a lease of lands and dwelling house in Maer and Ashley held by a lease of Andrew Thenderick and land in Maer held of Peter Macclesfield Esq. to his wife and son James, and instructs that his daughter Elizabeth is to be provided for "as she is not of sound mind and understanding " . He nominates Alice, and sons James and Josiah Executors of his will. John signs his will with a cross. The will is signed and witnessed by Thomas Simpson, Ann Beach and Josiah Salt.

Again, there are documents in the SRO that I would like to see concerning two equal third shares in manor of Ashley. Macclesfield/Fitzwilliam/Wedgwood 1721-1803 ref. D3272/1/4/2/1-69.

James Plant, yeoman farmer of Sidway Mill House, Maer, will of 1808

Bapt: 06/04/1750, Maer, son of James and Alice Cornes

Married: Mary Plant 18/05/1773 in Maer.

Buried: 13/10/1818 Maer

James' will of 1808 states "of Sidway Mill House, Maer" leaves to his brother John Plant of Weston Mill near Newport, Salop, and to his cousin Samuel Plant of Bearstone, Staffs the sum of £500 to invest for his wife Mary.

He leaves to his son John Plant a parcel of land left to him by his own father (James) a parcel of land in Maer in his occupation together with a piece of common or waste land awarded to him under the Enclosure of the Commons and waste lands of Maer Heath. And all the messuage and dwelling house and garden held that he sometime purchased from Josiah Wedgwood Esq. in Maer Heath now in the occupation of James Hampton. He also leaves to his son John a piece of land held by lease from Josiah Wedgwood and a land and farm held under George Watkin Kenrick Esq. He leaves money and a bed to his daughter Elizabeth. He also leaves to son John, daughters Sarah Hitchin, Mary Plant and Elizabeth Cordwell equal shares in land near Maerway Lane of about 5 acres, and 6 acres of land purchased from Josiah Wedgwood and arable land purchased from William Machin in Ashley.

James signs his will and is witnessed and signed by Thomas Plant, (another I can't read) and James Taylor.

Notes: the land purchased from Josiah Wedgwood is Josiah Wedgwood II, son of the master potter. The Maer estate was purchased by Josiah Wedgwood in 1802, second son of Josiah Wedgwood, master potter. Robert Darwin the father of Charles Darwin lent Josiah the money to buy the estate of around 1,000 acres and costing £30,000.00. The younger Wedgwood was uncle to Charles Darwin who visited many times in the early 1830s and who married Wedgwood's daughter (that is, Darwin's cousin), Emma, in 1839.

At some point after 1802, James Plant, a yeoman farmer of Maer purchased a dwelling house with gardens and a parcel of land from Josiah Wedgwood in Maer Heath, a rugged moor to the west of the village.

James' cousin Samuel Plant was baptised 17/04/1731 in Mucklestone, the son of Samuel Plant (who's baptism I can't find but I think was born about 1710) and Mary Stevenson of Bearstone. Samuel born 1731 leaves a will of 1809 and leaves the farm in Bearstone to his wife Margaret and children Samuel, John, William and Elizabeth. Of these children, Samuel dies a bachelor in 1825, William is a William of Ridgwardine, John is a farmer of Bearstone and Elizabeth marries William Tew. I can't find any of these children's baptisms in Staffordshire or Shropshire and I am now of the belief that they were not baptised.

Summary

This Plant research seems never ending, as whilst I have hit a brick wall around 1680, I have expanded the Plant family tree to great lengths and new little revelations do occasionally appear which send me on another unknown and quite often exciting path. So, if there is one message of hope I can give to anyone reading this it is: don't give up, keep researching, and look beyond the standard research websites. If like me you have family that left wills and land or leases are involved, do search the relevant County Records Office as they hold a wealth of fascinating information.