

Charter Towsey of Henley upon Thames in the County of Wexford Gentleman

Mary Harriet Sparks

H. B. Moorhouse

TOWSEY TALES

NAME: John Freeman

BIRTH DETAILS: circa 1589, probably Wantage, Berks.

DEATH DETAILS: 1651, Wantage

CHART REF: Towsey Chart F2

MARRIAGE DETAILS: circa 1609, Wantage

SPOUSE: Marye (Marie) Whistler

The grandmother of Mary Freeman, born circa 1640 to 1650, the wife of William Towsey (born circa 1642), was Marie Whistler, (Towsey Chart F2), born in Cholsey in 1593, into a well-to-do, land owning family. Her father, Richard Whistler, had several properties around the area.

Mary Freeman's grandfather was John Freeman, a tailor in Wantage who died in 1651, leaving a will that gives some insight into the comparatively meagre domestic lives of even comfortable families of that time: -

To cousin Joan Franklin of Winterbourne, £5 and one florkbody and bedstead and coverlet blanket and bolster one shoote with all other things there unto belonging and also three pewter platters one pewter flagon and basin, five pewter porringers and two little saucers one brass pot one pair of Andivand one spitt and fire shovel one pair of tongs one thost one Dosoroní little table bowl and one warming pan And I give to her son William £5 then I give and bequeath to my Doyen John, Squire - holder of Ashampstead forever (?) pounds in money and to Mary his wife £5 and all my remaining apparel except one suit And I give to his daughter Mary £5 Then I give and bequeath to my Doyen Thomas Whistler of Chaddleworth 20 shillings and to Martha his wife (?) pounds and I give to his grandchildren 20 shillings a piece then I give and bequeath to my Doyen Robert Freeman of Wantage 20 shillings and a pair of iron dogs and one suit of apparel for himself And I give and bequeath unto his wife 20 shillings And I give unto his four children viz Robert, Edward, Mary and Samuel 20 shillings And I give to Doyen Edward Freeman ten shillings and I give to Isabell his wife 20 shillings and to his 3 children 20 shillings a piece then I give to the 3 children of my Doyen John Freeman of East Lockinge aforesaid viz Francis, Ann and Mary 20 shillings each Then I give to



HAYMAKING Woodcut print, early C17th
Jacobean Saucy Humour

my Doyen Richard Chardman (?) of Ginge 20 shillings and to his brother William 10 shillings Then to my Doyen Anne sister of Doyen John Freeman of Lockinge £5.

Plenty of unfamiliar words in John Freeman's will. When reading documents of that time, we must remember that spelling was not standardized. In this case, it seems that word usage was also thrown about with little concern for convention. The word 'doyen' usually refers to a senior member of a group. In his will, John has used it to refer to every member of his family for whom he has some affection.

Some of the household items are also impossible to positively identify, such as a 'florkbody', 'thost' or a 'shoote'. 'Dosoroni' probably refers to a brand or style of bowl. Iron Dogs are used to stop logs rolling out of a fireplace. Similarly, a pair of andivand are brackets on which logs sit in the fireplace and the spitt is that on which an animal is turned over the fire.

We see also that the best tableware is made of pewter. Poorer people tended to use wooden bowls. A porringer is a larger bowl.

Both the Freeman and Whistler families seem to have prominent in the Wantage area at that time.