

Three Breach Siblings – ‘Removed’

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In this article, Geoff discovers that some of his Sussex ancestors required support in the mid-1700s. Geoff writes: ‘The records of the Overseers of the Poor can often be found online by searching for the relevant parish on Familysearch.org. This is where these records were found.’

IN 1738, three siblings, John, Thomas and Sarah **Breach**, having lost their mother and their grandmother, and deserted by their father, were ‘removed’ from the village of Burwash to the town of Lewes St Michael in Sussex, England. Three years later they were separated and apprenticed out at the ages of 12 years, 13 years and 9 years respectively. This is their story and it serves to illustrate the value of records associated with the poor, in this case the parish records of the Overseers of the Poor.

Their father John Breach was born at Burwash in 1698 and at some stage, perhaps to serve his apprenticeship as a shoemaker, moved to the parish of Lewes St Michael where he gained settlement. He moved back to Burwash, probably in the 1720s, carrying a certificate of settlement from Lewes St Michael stating that they were responsible for him should he fall on hard times and need parish relief. With this he was permitted to reside and work at Burwash. There he met Sarah **Skinner** and they married at the neighbouring village of Dallington on 6 January 1728/29. Three children followed, all baptised at Burwash:

- John Breach: baptised 4 July 1729
- Thomas Breach: baptised 20 April 1731
- Sarah Breach: baptised 15 May 1733

Tragedy followed the birth of the fourth child in December 1735, when the mother Sarah died together with her newborn daughter, Mary. At this point the records hint at the grandmother, Elizabeth Breach, stepping in to keep the family together, but this was not to last with her death in December 1737. This created a problem for the Overseers of the Poor at Burwash as the father had left town, for whatever reason, and the children now required support from the parish.

On 27 March 1738, the Overseers of the Poor sent the following letter to Lewes St Michael:

Gentlemen

There was one John Breach a shoemaker came to our towne by a [settlement] certificate from you and he having now left his family they come to us and desire relief. We

*therefore send to you that you may fetch them to you, or we must bring them with an order
from your brother officer
J Butler
Burwash
March 27 1738*

Subsequently on 11 April 1738 a removal order was issued (see Fig. 1 below).¹

Two days later the children were taken to Lewes St Michael, where the Overseers of the Poor there were presented with an invoice² (see Fig. 2 next page).

The Overseers of the Poor at Lewes St Michael continued to support the children over the next few years until 1741 when they began to find apprenticeships for them. This was a

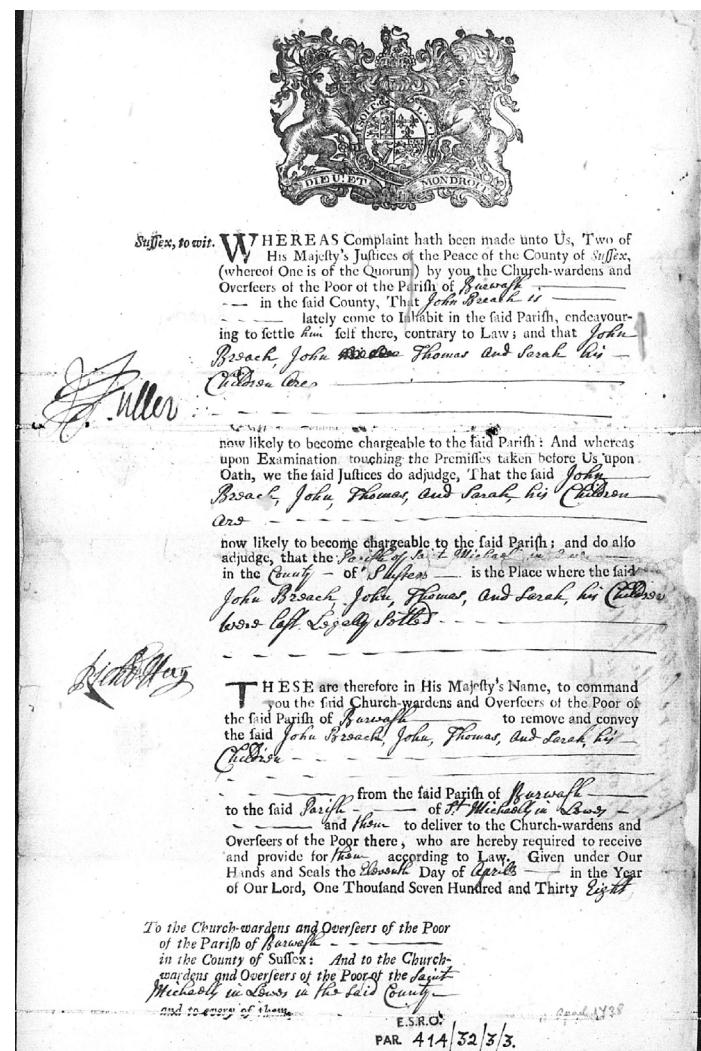


Fig. 1. Removal Order for John Breach and his three children to be removed from the parish of Burwash to the parish of St Michael in Lewes, issued 11 April 1738.

common approach taken for orphaned children as it provided a family for the child and they learnt a trade. It also removed the child as a financial burden on the parish – a win/win you might say – however in this case it meant that the three siblings were widely separated which must have been very hard on them. The children were apprenticed as follows:

22 Aug 1741: John Breach (12 years) apprenticed to John **Hemsley** of East Chiltington in Westmeston, yeoman, for 12 years to learn 'the art and mystery of husbandry' (see Fig. 3 below).³

6 Feb 1741: Sarah Breach (9 years of age) apprenticed to John **Edwards** of Cuckfield, husbandman for 12 years to learn 'the art of housewifery'.⁴

17 Sep 1743: Thomas Breach (13 years of age) apprenticed to George **Gibson**, St Sepulchre, Middlesex, cook, for 11 years to learn 'the art and mystery of a cook'.⁵

One wonders where the father was during all this. Did he truly desert his children, never to see them again? Did he provide some support to them through the Overseers of the Poor at Lewes St Michael? Why didn't he marry a second time and keep his family together, as many men did? So many questions for which there are no answers.

¹ The records do give a hint that the brothers John and Thomas Breach were later able to make contact as both were married at Fleet Prison in London:⁶

31 May 1750 Thomas **Breech** batchelor of St Andrews
Holborn cook and Eliz. **McGinnis** of the same parish.

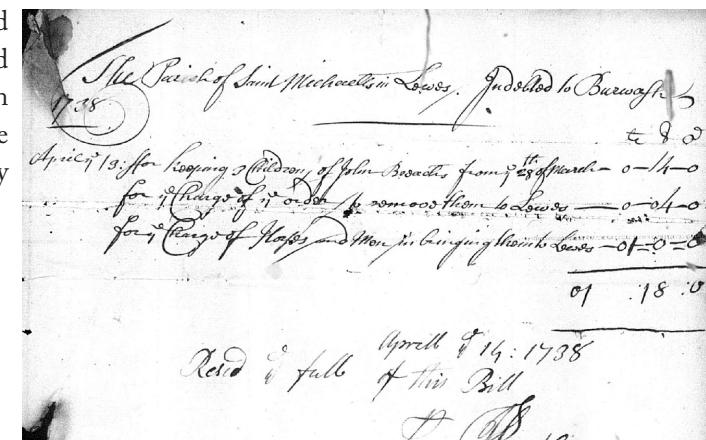
24 April 1753 John **Brick** taylor of Westminston [Westmeston] Sussex; Ann **Hildrop** spinster of Ditchling.

Was this coincidence or had they managed to find each other? I suspect the latter.

Unfortunately, the trail stops there for the siblings Thomas and Sarah Breach. However, there is some more to add for their brother John, my six times great grandfather. He and Ann Hildrop had two children, John and Joseph, baptised at Ditchling in 1754 and 1755 respectively. At some stage, the family moved to Hamsey where the children John and Joseph both married and had family. John's first child was named Sarah, my five times great grandmother, and one would like to think she was named after her orphaned aunt.

Notes and References

- 1 ESRO: PAR 414/32/3/3
- 2 ESRO: PAR 414/32/3/5
- 3 ESRO: PAR 414/33/38
- 4 ESRO: PAR 414/33/36
- 5 ESRO: PAR 414/33/41
- 6 Prisons like the Fleet and the King's Bench Prison became popular destinations for couples interested in quick, no-questions-asked nuptials because of the number of clerics imprisoned for debt who were willing to conduct the marriages for a fee. The clerics often paid for the privilege of living outside the gates of the prison so they could conduct these services.



The Parish of Saint Michael in Lewes. Indebted to Burwash.
1738 April 13

for keeping 3 children of John Breach from £0 14s 0d
28th of March:

for the charge of the order to remove them to £0 04s 0d
Lewes:

for the charge of horses and men in bringing £01 0s 0d
them to Lewes:

£01 18s 0d

April 19, 1738

Received

Above: Fig. 2. Invoice from the parish of Burwash for the costs of removing the three children of John Breach to the parish of St Michael in Lewes, their last place of legal settlement, 13 April 1738

Below: Fig. 3. Apprenticeship indenture, 22 August 1741: John Breach (age 12 years) apprenticed to John Hemsley of East Chiltington in Westmeston, yeoman, for 12 years.

