

Documentary History for

The Priory and Priory Cottages, 123 and 125-7 The Causeway, Steventon, Oxfordshire

Site Code: STE-F

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

Nat Alcock and Dan Miles



Fig. 1. View of the house from the north.

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Oxbow Books

STE-F: THE PRIORY AND PRIORY COTTAGES, 123 AND 125-7 THE CAUSEWAY, STEVENTON, OXFORDSHIRE

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Documentary history by Nat Alcock and Chris Currie with the assistance of Heather Horner and Catherine Lorigan

References: Currie, C. R. J. (1976) 'Smaller domestic architecture in North Berkshire, c 1300 - c 1650', Oxford, D. Phil thesis; Currie, C. R. J. (1992) 'Larger medieval houses in the Vale of the White Horse', *Oxoniensia*, 57, 81-244; C. R. J. Currie (2009). 'Another giant 'peasant' house? The site identification of Priory Cottages, Steventon, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 74 (2010 for 2009), 185-9.

For court roll and documentary source references, see the bibliography of primary sources.

In the admissions tables, Mess = messuage (house); a r p = acres rods perches; v. = virgate/yardland; d. = died. s. = surrendered.

Abbreviations:

BRO Berkshire Record Office, Reading

Reg Parish registers at BRO; transcript published on CD by Oxfordshire Family History Society.

TNA The National Archives

WAM Westminster Abbey Muniments

Location Maps

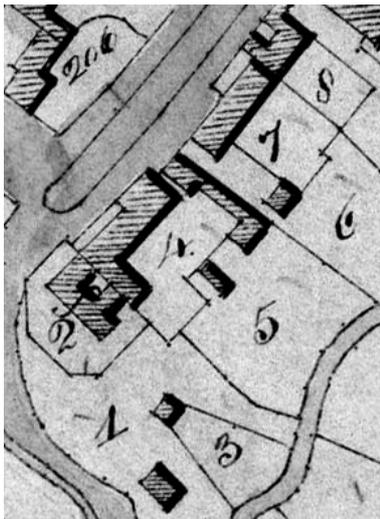


Fig. 2. Excerpts from the 1842 and 1839 maps of Steventon: (a, left) the 1842 Tithe Map; (b, right) the 1839 map

Priory Cottages and The Priory are plots 2 and 4 respectively. (1839 map reproduced courtesy of Steventon Parish Council).

The two components that make up Steventon Priory stand at the west end of The Causeway, on Tithe Map plots 1-3 and 4-5. Although originally one house, they were partitioned in 1564 and have descended separately since then. In 1842, Priory Cottages were owned by William Stone, described as

six tenements occupied by R. Boshier; H. Mills and others; The Priory was owned by Thomas Stevens, junior, and was in his own occupation. In the indexes to copyholdings, they are identified as holdings 72 (Priory Cottages) and 53 (The Priory), and are referred to below as The Priory (W) and The Priory (E).

ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY

Structure and dating of the building

The building contains four medieval ranges around a courtyard: a hall on the south side (Fig. 3, C), service ranges on the east (D), two phases of parlour ranges on the west (A-B), a linking range (B) and another parlour (E) to the north. Further east are ranges dated to the late sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. The Priory (E) has been extensively tree-ring dated, and the block plan gives a dating summary.

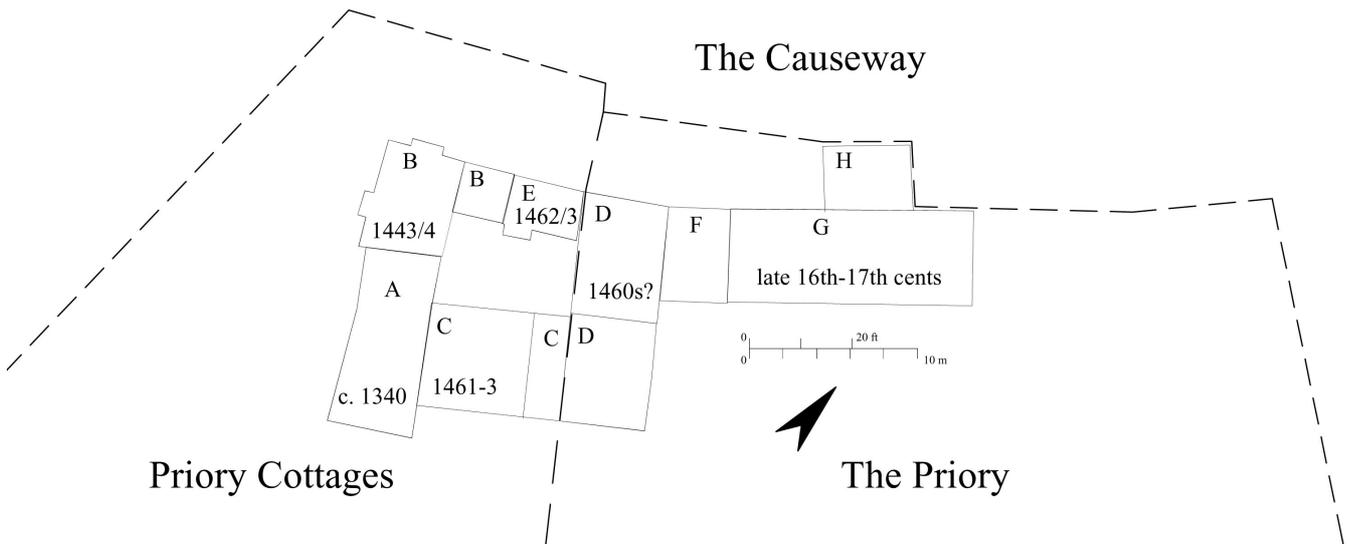


Fig. 3. Block plan of The Priory and Priory Cottages, showing dating and property boundaries (dashed).

The Priory (E and W together) was previously identified as the manor house of Steventon. However, a recent comparison of the documentary evidence for building work at the manor and the tree-ring dates showed that that this identification could not be correct and therefore that the house could only have been one of the village copyholdings (Currie (2009)). The present work fully confirms this deduction and for the first time elucidates the history of the property.

History of The Priory

In the following sections, the history is set out in sections, working backwards and where necessary examining the two halves separately.

Ownership after 1664 (Table 1)

The post-1664 sequences for the two parts can be followed straightforwardly in the court books. Priory Cottages (The Priory (W)) can be directly linked to the 1842 Tithe Map, since it is the only property held by William Stone at this date. Identifying Priory House (The Priory (E)) in the admissions sequence, in the tenure of Thomas Stevens, is also straightforward, since the only other properties owned in 1842 by a Thomas Stevens (in fact, another man of the same name) were freeholds (The Old Vicarage and 99 The Causeway, STE-G), whose history is known.

The Priory (W) (Table 1(a)) descended in the Smalbone family (Table 6(a)) from 1677 when it was surrendered by John Smalbone (II) for the use of his son, John (III), as a messuage with 2½ virgates of land. It was similarly surrendered in 1701 by the latter for the next John (IV), who had to pay his father

an annuity of £30.¹ The latter died in 1708, without children, leaving his property to his sister Anna Pocock; she died in 1741 and her husband Richard in 1753. It remained with her family until 1764, when her daughter sold it to William Stone, whose grandson was the owner in 1842.² It is probable that Richard and Anna Pocock were the last owners to occupy this half of The Priory, which was probably divided into cottages when it came into the hands of non-resident owners.

The Priory (E) (Table 1(b)) comprised a messuage and 1½ virgates inherited by Thomas (III) Stevens (Table 6(b)) in 1664 on the death of his uncle, William, although it was in the tenure of Thomas Grove (as bequeathed by William's widow, Anne). He passed it on in 1686 to a non-resident relative, James Stevens of East Ginge, and it was held by this family until 1758, when it was acquired by Champnies Playdell of Northmoor, Oxfordshire, who also bought at least one other substantial Steventon property at this period (see STE-G). He left it in trust for his daughter Mary Grove, from whom it passed to Mary Hopkins in 1779 and was immediately sold to Thomas Stevens; the relationship between him and the earlier owners is uncertain. Thomas's grandson, another Thomas, held The Priory (E) in 1842 and, unlike The Priory (W), this was still owner-occupied.

Table 1. Admissions 1664 onwards.

Adm refers to numbered entries in WAM 57045, or to the volume and page in the court books.

(a) The Priory (W) (Priory Cottages; holding 72)

<i>Adm</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>Rent</i>
102	1677	John Smalbone, jun	s. John Smalbone, father	Messuage, 2½v	£2 0 11d
268	1701	John Smalbone, jun	s. John Smalbone, sen (28 May 1701)	House of John Smalbone, sen; Brook close, etc; 65 ac	£1/14/8
313 1/379	1710	Anna Pocock	d. John Smalbone [s. to will & d. 1708]	All property to sister, Anna	£1/14/8
336 1/412	1713	Ric Pocock & Ann [joint then survivor]	s. Ric Pocock & Ann	<i>Nuper antiquam mansional domum Johannis Smalbone</i> and his ancestors; adj Brook Close; 65 ac	£1/14/8
466 2/171	1739	Jn Wilder, Ric Pocock & Ann	s. Ric Pocock & Ann [conditional]	Mess, Brook Close, 65 ac. To pay £817	£1/14/8
603	1764	Wm Stone	s. John Wilder, Mich Belcher of W Hanney, mason & Anne, wife	Sale & assignment of mortgage [Anne, sister of John Pocock, decd.]	£1/14/8
698	1779	John Stone	d. Wm, father	Cust Mess & adj Brook Close & 65 ac land & close	£1/14/8
	1804	Wm Stone	d. John Stone	[same]	£1/14/8

¹ The parents died in 1687 and 1701 respectively (*Reg*). Confusingly, it appears that both Johns had wives called Phillis, and children with very similar names. The two Johns appear to be those baptised in 1649 and 1668, as sons of John and Phillis Smalbone.

² He was the William Stone of Wantage, and his son was John Stone of Wantage, whose wills were proved in 1778 and 1803 (TNA, PROB 11/1039; PROB 11/1042).

(b) The Priory (E) (holding 53)

Adm	Date	To	From	Property	Rent
1	1664	Thomas S, nephew	d. Wm. Stevens	1½v	19s 9d
142	1686	James Stevens of East Ginge	s. Thomas Stevens	mess, 1½ v in ten. Thos Grove, yeoman, (45ac)	19s 9d
143	1686	Thomas Stevens	s. James S, of E. Ginge, his father	M, 1½ ydl	19s 9d
468	1739	Thos Stevens	d. Thomas, father	M, 1½ ydl	19s 9d
562	1758	Champnies Playdell	s. Thos & Mary Stevens	M, 1½ ydl	19s 9d
648	1773	Wm Rogers; Geo Townsend trustees)	d. & will Champnies Playdell	[trustees for daughter Mary Grove, to receive profits	19s 9d
700	1779	Mary Hopkins, wid	s. Wm Rogers (tee)	[Apparently a sale]	19s 9d
701	1779	Thos Stevens, sen	s. Mary Hopkins	[sale]	19s 9d
702	1779	Mary Hopkins	s. Thomas Stevens	Cond surr for £463	19s 9d
738	1782	Stevens, Francis	d. Thomas Stevens	M, 1½ ydl	19s 9d
	1809	Stevens, Thomas			19s 9d

Ownership from 1600 to 1664 (Table 2)

Establishing ownership in this period is difficult, because of the gaps in the surviving court rolls, although an outline can be obtained from the manorial rentals. For The Priory (W) (holding 72), these show John Smalbone in 1696 and 1686, paying respectively £2 1s 5d and £2 8s 3d, and in 1645-6, William Smalbone paying £2 4s 3d. In 1686, The Priory (E) (holding 53) was held by Thomas Grove, sub-tenant to Thomas Stevens (as in admission 142), who also held most of the adjoining property (4s rent). In 1645-6 it was in the hands of William Stevens paying £1 2s 6d.³

For a conclusive link between earlier admissions and the post-1664 sequences, the key evidence comes from the 1604 surrender by Thomas Smalbone to Thomas Stevens of a messuage between the tenement of Richard Kirfoot (E) and the messuage of John Smalbone (W) (C704). The Kirfoot property can be identified as 109-119 The Causeway (holdings 46 and 84, originally three properties, but later to become the whole of TM 7).⁴ Thus, the property surrendered in 1604 can only be Priory (E) (Hld 53), and the owner of Priory (W) (Hld 72) in 1604 was John Smalbone.

The Priory (W)

The relationship between the two John Smalbones holding The Priory (W) in 1604 and 1664 is shown in the family tree (Table 6(a)). They are illuminated particularly by the will of John (I) Smalbone the elder (d 1619; below). He was the brother of Edward Smalbone (of Tudor House, see STE-B) and son of Thomas (d 1558), progenitor of the Smalbones in Steventon.⁵ John must have had at least two families, as he had children over a period of 41 years. After two daughters, at least one of whom died, his eldest son, and eventual heir, William was born in 1579/80. At John's death some land was already held by John's other sons Edward and Richard, and possibly Francis. His Brookeheise close confirms him as the John who owned The Priory in 1604, and the surrenders to other sons might explain the diminution of the rent between 1599 and 1645, when William held it. William surrendered the farm in February 1645/6

³ In 1696, one Francis Smalbone appears to be the sub-tenant of part of holding 53, paying 7s 4d, with the remainder of the property presumably being held by another unidentified tenant.

⁴ It is relatively easy to recognise because it abutted on the vicarage to the east (TM 8).

⁵ This branch of the family can be identified as that in one of the Smalbone pedigrees included in the Berkshire 1665-6 Heralds' Visitation (p. 279), certified by John Smalbone (II) in 1664

(C271) to his son John (II) (b 1624), but not the house, presumably because he still lived in it (C271). He died in December 1648, and John must have inherited the house then.⁶

The Priory (E)

The Stevens holding also descended in that family (Table 6(b)) until after 1664, but the family relationships are of great complexity with numerous Thomases and Williams living at the same time. All that is entirely certain is that the property was acquired by a Thomas Stevens in 1604 and reappears in the hands of Thomas (III) from 1664 to 1686.⁷ It seems very likely that the Thomas in 1604 was Thomas (I), the head of the junior branch of the family and, indeed the bailiff at this date, and that he bought The Priory (E) to establish his younger sons, William and possibly Thomas (II).⁸

Following his 1604 admission, in 1614 (C216), Thomas surrendered what was presumably The Priory (E) (or part of it) with additional land to William, who is the owner listed in the 1645-6 rental. In 1654, the latter made a lease to trustees for the benefit of Anne Stephens (presumably his wife), and he probably died in 1657 (*Reg*) without children; Anne appears to be the occupier of The Priory (E) in the 1664 Hearth Tax,⁹ dying in 1670. William's successor, his nephew, Thomas (III), was presumably the son of his brother Edward, originally receiving just the farmland, but obtaining the house after Anne's death, although he was apparently responsible for the full rent.

It is probable that Thomas (I) also made provision for his third son, Thomas (II), at the same time as William, possibly with part of The Priory (E). This Thomas is an intriguing and enigmatic member of the family. His children, Thomas, Ann, James and Elizabeth, were baptised in St George's Chapel, Windsor in 1630, 1633, 1634 and 1636, and his will was proved in 1644, in the royalist prerogative court established in Oxford in 1643-4.¹⁰ Thus, he would seem to have a strong connection with the royalist cause during the Civil War, though no detailed information about him has been discovered. His will makes it clear that he was William's brother, also that he had received copyhold property from Thomas (I), his father (confirmed by C228), and he leased it to his wife, Anne in 1638 (C174). He left his copyholding to his brothers-in-law, Richard and John Dalby, and his brothers Edward and William Stevens, as trustees for his son, James and daughter Elizabeth. Thus, it is plausible that James Stevens of East Ginge receiving The Priory (E) in 1686 was this James, the son of Thomas (II), and that the property then included both William's and Thomas's inheritance.

Table 2. Admissions and leases 1604-1664 for The Priory (E) and (W)

Only C271 relates to Priory (W). It is not certain if C174 and C228 concern the Priory.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>Admitted</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1661	C271	John Smalbone	s. Wm Smalbone	28 Feb 1645/6. 2 ½ yardlands; no mess	7421, rot. 4
1614	C216	Wm Stevens	s. Thos Stevens his father	Mess and 22 a arable, rent 24s 6d	41501

⁶ Buried on 17th December (*Reg*). His will was dated 4th May 1648 but was not proved until 8th October 1670. His inventory was taken on 29th Dec 1648.

⁷ The 1664 court record is only a note of the death of William, and that Thomas was heir.

⁸ For the two main branches of the family in Steventon see STE-H and STE-K.

⁹ E.g. E 179/75/381, m. 7 (3 hearths).

¹⁰ *IGI*; PROB 10/641/198 f 414. His daughter Ann died in 1633 (burial in St George's Chapel register), and his son Thomas probably also died young, since he is not mentioned in Thomas's will (in which he described himself as of Windsor); in 1638 (Table 2) he was of Dorchester. The will also names his brothers Edward, William, George, Lawrence, Robert, and his sister Mary Grove. That he was Thomas (II), son of Thomas (I) is established both from the names of his siblings, and from a 1630 lease naming him as Thomas Stevens of Steventon (SGC XV.51.94 St Mary Bourne, Hampshire). We thank the archivist of St George's Chapel for this information.

Year	Adm	Admitted	From	Property	WAM
1638	C174	John Hersey and Edw Stevens	Thos Stevens of Dorchester gent, 60 years after his death	3 Sept 1638. Lease of his customary lands to Anne Stevens wife of Thomas as long as she lives	7420, rot 2
1638	C228	Uses of his will	s. Thos Stevens	Copyholds held from surr of Thos Stevens his late father	7420, rot 2
1661	C187	Wm Grove Hen Grove Fras Grove	Lease. William Stevens gent	19 Oct. 1654. Lease of his tenements for 59 years, exhibited by Anne Stephens	7421, rot 1

Ownership from 1477 to 1604 (Table 3)

From 1604, the two halves of The Priory can be traced back to their acquisition as a single property in about 1564 jointly by Richard Snell and Joan Smalbone from Robert Sharpe.¹¹ Immediately thereafter, it was partitioned between them, and they were then required to inform the court of what each part comprised (C446-7, C454, C465, C488). Joan's part was then surrendered in 1572 to the use of her son John (I) after her death (C511) (The Priory (W)). Richard's part (The Priory (E)) went to his daughter Sibill, who had married William Pecke (C492; C503); he died and she married again, but in 1574, surrendered her Steventon property to Joan Smalbone (apart from Brookheys Close) (C532-3). Joan immediately gave part of the land to Edward Smalbone and the house and the rest of this block of land to Thomas (the other two of her surviving sons) (C549-50). However, it passed away from the Smalbone family in 1604, when Thomas, then living in East Bockhampton, surrendered it to Thomas Stevens, as already described (C704).

The sequence of admissions for the Priory as an undivided entity runs to 1564, from the surrender by Richard Doo of his capital messuage in 1477 (just before his death in February of that year). He made several surrenders of parts of his extensive estate at or shortly before his death, to endow his sons, Thomas and John, and he left his house (the capital messuage) with some land to his wife Margaret for life, being divided after her death, with John receiving the capital messuage and the land being shared between John and another son William (C1541, C1172).¹² Following the death of John Doo in 1487-8, his property was inherited by his daughter Agnes, the wife of Robert Sharp (C1172, C1232, C1264-5). When she died in 1501, most of her property (including by implication The Priory) remained in the hands of her husband for his life, though a messuage and four virgates was settled on their young son, another Robert (C1276-7, C816, C883) (see *STE-I*). In fact, her husband died soon afterwards (in 1502-3) and when he was of age, young Robert was finally admitted to all the family property.¹³ Robert must, before his death have sold the house to Snell and Joan Smalbone, since in 1565 his widow Joan was suing them for her dower thirds (C448).¹⁴

¹¹ The acquisition itself is missing from the court rolls, but the name of the former owner is given in the rental of 1562-4 (WAM 8034). They also had to defend themselves against a claim for dower rights by Robert Sharpe's widow, Joan (C448), and a similar unsuccessful claim was attempted against Sibill Pecke (C527).

¹² E. Ashmole, *The Antiquities of Berkshire*, (1719 edn), vol i, p. 75 records the brass to Richard Doo in Steventon church, giving 5 Feb 1476/7 as the date of his death and naming his wives as Agnes and Joan. Margaret was presumably a third wife.

¹³ This took place in 1522, but must have been delayed for some reason, since he is recorded as being aged 18 in 1514 (C816).

¹⁴ This sale may have taken place in 1561, a year for which the court roll is missing. He was still alive in 1559, when he surrendered other property (C391-2).

Table 3. Admissions from 1477 to 1604

Year	Adm	Admitted	From	Property	WAM
1477	C1541	Margaret his w for life	s. out of court Ric Doo	1 capital messuage and 1 croft lying next to it lying next le Broke and parcel of 1 mess once Dalberes; lands [details]; <i>domus</i> called le Shepehouse with ½ a croft. Then divided between sons John & William.	7410, rot 19d
1489	C1172	Edmund Sharp and Rob Sharp		To make fine of divers yardlands late Ric Doo afterwards John Doo	7411, rot 7d
1495	C1238	Rob Sharpe and Agnes his wife dau & h of John Doo	[John Doo]	Tenement	7411, rot 14d
1499	C1264-5	Rob Sharp and Agnes his w, dau and h of John Doo	d. John Doo 3 Hen 7 [1487-8]	<i>Capital messuage and several other messuages – see below.</i> Heriot & mortuary 2 horses price 9s. Fine £10	7411, rot 19d
1501	C1276	Rob Sharpe son & h in custody of his father Robert	d. Agnes Sharpe late w of Rob Sharpe and dau & h of John Doo	1 mess and 4 v called Longes, another mess called Playces and 2 mess called Brytilton and Menlondes (<i>see STE-I</i>).	7411, rot 22
1501	C1277	Rob Sharpe for life, then Rob their son & heir	s. before death Agnes Sharpe late w of Rob Sharpe	1 mess and 4 v once in tenure of Ric Doo. To pay to Alice Sharpe [<i>sic</i>] mother of said Agnes 40s a year during her life (<i>see STE-I</i>).	7411, rot 22d
1514	C816	Rob Sharp son & h aged 18	d. Agnes Sharp w of Rob Sharpe dau of John Doo	[d. 14 years earlier] Divers tens	7412, rot 7
1522	C883	Rob Sharpe son & h of Agnes, of full age	d. Rob Sharp [1502-3] and Agnes his w [1500-1]	[includes] 1 Capital messuage and 1 croft of land adj to it lying next Lee; parcel of 1 mess once Dawberes. Inherited from Agnes.	7412, rot 15
1564	C446	Ric Snell	s. Joan Smalbone	All messuages, houses edifices barns stables etc as according to a partition between sd Joan and Ric Snell by indenture [1564]	7418, rot 7d
1564	C447	Joan Smalbone	s. Ric Snell gent	[same]	7418, 7d
1565	C448	Ric Snell gent, Joan Smalbone wid, John Crocker gent, defs	Joan Sharpe wid of Rob Sharpe decd, quer	1/3 part of divers mess lands pastures and leasowes called yattes and longes	7418, rot 8
1565	C454	Joan Smalbone and Ric Snell		To show which lands they surrendered to each other at last court	7418, rot 8d
1567	C465	Joan Smalbone	Ric Snell	[see main text]	7418, rot 10
1569	C488	Ric Snell	Joan Smalbone	[see main text]	7418, r 12d

Year	Adm	Admitted	From	Property	WAM
1570/ 1	C492	Wm Pecke gent & Sibille his w dau & h of sd Ric	s. Ric Snell	All mess cottage lands tenements and other customary lands	7418, rot 13; 7524, f 8-9
1571 /2	C503	Sibil Pecke	d. Wm Pecke who held with Sibil his w	Divers mess cottages, etc. by surr of Ric Snell, gent [1570]. To show evidence that she holds freely by charter and not by copy [as she claims, wrongly]	7418, rot 14
1572	C527	Sibil Pecke wid and John Crocker gent, defs	Joan Sharpe late wife of Rob Sharpe, quer	Part of certain land, etc messuages lands, etc called Yattes & Longes now in their ten, as her dower by grant of sd Robert	7418, rot 17
1574	C532	Joan Smalbone wid	s. Lawrence Chesyll gent and Sibill his w, wid of Wm Pecke	All mess [rubbed] cottages lands tenements and other hereditaments, EXCEPT one close called Brookheys	7418, rot 18
1574	C533	Wm Steavons sen	[same]	One close called [rubbed, illeg]...	7418, rot 18
1575	C549	Thos Smalbone her son	s. Joan Smalbone wid	Mess once Ric Snells & close adj, betw ten of said Joan Smalbone (S) & ten of Thos Smalbone junior (N); lands [details]. EXCEPT all common pasture for lands surr by said Joan to Edward and John Smalbone her sons	7418, rot 20d
1575	C550	Edw Smalbone [her son]	s. Joan Smalbone	12 a late of Lawrence Chisselde and Sibill his wife [details]	7418, r 20d
1604	C704	Thos Steevens	s. Thos Smalbone of East Bockhampton Berks	1 mess between land of Ric Kirfoote (E) & mess of John Smalbone (W); orchard and backside adjoining said tenement; 1 v land ;1 croft called Pugsden bel to sd ten; pasture of 2 cows	7524, ff 19-26
1604	C705	Thos Stevens	s. John Stevens	Barn (horreum) and parcel of land adj & 1 a in yeldingfurlonge, 1 ½ a in meare furlong [rent 1s 3d?]	7524, ff 19-26
1604	C710	Thos Stevens	s. Rob Wells	21 a arable, 6 ½ a meadow and appurts cont half virgate of land, rent 12s	7524, ff 19-26

Description in C1264-5 (summarised). 1 rod [*recte* virgate] called Yates and appurts [*no house*] 27 ac [*details*] 1 mess late Wm Shepard and another mess late Brikeltons and ½ v [*details*] with meadow and pasture belonging; **1 Capital Messuage** and 1 croft land adjoining it lying next Lee; parcel of 1 mess once Daweroes [*Dalberes*]; lands [*details*]; ½ of a domus called le Shepehouse with ½ croft land adj; lands [*details*]; 1 v land called Longes [*details*]; 1 v late Henry Cokes [*details*] with meadow and pasture belonging; 1 mess called Goringes and 23 a 1r lying on the hill [total arable 140½ a]. Heriot and mortuary 2 horses price 9s appraised in said yr 3. Fine £10 0s 0d.

Ownership and building history before 1477 (Table 4 (a-b))

The **capital messuage** is not mentioned before Richard Doo's pre-death surrender in 1477, although it is clear from the court rolls that he already owned the corresponding properties in 1462. For the Priory itself and , two key questions arise:

- (1) Was it Richard Doo or his predecessor who carried out the extension to the Priory in 1443-4?
 (2) Which family owned the original fourteenth-century house, with its chamber block (Fig. 4, A) and (inferred) hall?

Light is thrown on both questions from an examination of Doo's property acquisitions, from his first appearance in the court rolls in 1430 up to 1462. Fortunately, numbers of his properties can be shown to have stood elsewhere in the village and cannot have formed part of The Priory.¹⁵ There remain four or five adjoining messuages, one obtained from William Vicarys, two or three from William and Thomas Grete, and one from John Benet. This group is well-documented, generally including abuttals, and its only likely position in the village is on the Priory site. It is worth noting that these messuages are the only ones of Doo's that cannot be traced after 1463 (see also *STE-I*).

From the abuttals, various arrangements of the messuages are possible. Assuming that the two 'Wylmot' messuages adjoined each other and leaving aside the third Grete property, the simplest layout consistent with the evidence appears to be:

<i>[west end]</i>			<i>[east end]</i>
May 1435 R Doo from Wm Vicarys mess & ½ v 'Wylmottes' [C1973]	Apr 1428 Wm & Thomas Grete from Wm Grete, mess & ½ v called Wylemotes [C1903]	Apr 1428 Wm Grete from Ric Wyke, mess once with Colynbakeres ½ v, between mess John Hattere (E) & Wm Grete (W) [C1904]	May 1456 R Doo from John Benet, 1 mess once Hatteres in Westend next ten. of Ric Doo [C1794]
	Nov 1435 R Doo from Wm & Thomas Grete 3 messuages [C1981]		

This third Grete message could be part of this group, or might lie elsewhere in the village (although no likely Doo houses elsewhere are unaccounted for). Other more complicated arrangements (separating the two Wilmot messuages) place the Grete messuages at the western end, with Hatteres next, and then the other Doo acquisitions. Most importantly, they also have a former Wilmote message at the western end.

The 1456 acquisition from John Benet is the only property obtained by Doo between 1443 and 1462, and however the four or five holdings were arranged, it must have been at or near the eastern end of the block. Thus, it is certain that the 1443 building work, carried out at the western end, was undertaken by Richard Doo, since he had owned the properties there since 1435.

Table 4. Admissions prior to 1477

(a) 1463 to 1477

Date	Adm	To	From	Property	WAM
1463	C1388	Ric Doo	s. Wm Sheperde and Isabell his w	1 mess called Goryng [see also C1546]	7410, rot 4]
1465	C1412	Ric Doo	s. Rob Smerte and Alice his w	1 mess and gdn adj cont 1 a, and 8 a in fields [details]	7410, rot 7
1465	C1412	Ric Doo	s. Rob Smerte and Alice his w	1 mess and gdn adj cont 1 a, and 8 a in fields [details]	7410, rot 7
1466	C1418	Ric Doo, to hold at will	s. John Sawyer	2 cotts once Cleres and ½ v land and pasture once Cleres	7410, rot 7

¹⁵ These comprised: a message late William Shepherd (called Goryng in 1463), a second message called Goring (bought by Doo in 1430) and a message late Brikeltons, both passing to Thomas Doo in 1477; a message identified as the later Wantage Town Lands; two cottages once Cleres (as cottages, unlikely to be The Priory); a message in Eastend; three messuages, Vowcellys, Bartelottes and Romaynes, which passed to John Scolys junior in 1473 and became Cook's Close (TM 40). Thomas Doo seems to have died without heirs, so his property was re-combined with that of his brother, John, but it can be followed through independently of the latter's capital message (see *STE-I*).

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1469	C1450	Ric Doo	s. John Iremonger	3 mess late Hen Cooke called Vowcellys, Bartelottes and Romaynes with one way outside the sd messuage[?s]	7410, rot 11
1470	C1457	John Hawyll	s. Ric Doo	1 mess and garden adj cont est 1 a, and 8 a in fields	7410, r 12d
1471	C1478 cf C1538	Ric Doo	s. Hen Abyngdon & John Pynnock	1 mess in Eastend and ½ v land with meadow leasow & pasture thereto belonging once John Bryghtelton	7410, rot 14
1473	C1487	John Scolys jun	s. Ric Doo	[as 1469, C1450]	7410, r 15d
1477	C1538	Thos Doo	s. bef death Ric Doo	1 mess late Wm Shepard and another mess late Brykeltons and ½ v land [details]	7410, rot 19d
1477	C1546	Thos Doo his son	s. bef death [?Ric Doo?]	1 mess called Gorynges and 23 a 1 r on the hill	7410, r 19d

(b) before 1463 (excluding Wilmot entries – see Table 5)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1428	C1899	Ric Longe	Late John Bartholot	Fine for 1 mess 1 v late J B once Wm Longe's father of Ric	7264, rot 10
1428	C1900	Ric Longe	Grant	1 mess ½ v once Prynces	7264, rot 10
1428	C1902	Wm Baker son & h of Stephen	Lord	Fine for 1 mess ½v called Colyngbakers, Stephen held, a long time in lord's hand	7264, rot 11
1428	C1904	Wm Grete	s. Ric Wyke	Exchange: mess once belonging to ½ v called Colynbakeres betw mess of John Hattere (E) & mess of Wm Grete (W)	7264, rot 11
1428	C1905	Ric Wyke	s. Wm Grete	Exchange: croft in Eastcroft	7264, rot 11
1430	C1914	Ric Doo	s. bef death Rob atte Mylle	1 mess ½ v [of Abingdon]	7264, rot 13
1432	C1935	Thos Grete	s. Wm Baker	Exchange: 1 Mess called Bakers	7264, r 17d
1432	C1936	Wm Baker	s. Thos Grete	Exchange: 1 a	7264, r 17d
1432	C1942	Lease to Ric Doo	Lord	1 mess 1 ½ v called Longes. For 7 years from eve of Mich	7264, rot 18
1435	C1981	Ric Doo	s. Wm Grete and Thos Grete	3 mess 9 a land [details]	7264, rot 24
1437	C2002	Ric Doo	s. Ric Long	2 mess 1½ v	7264, rot 27
1438	C2012	Ric Smyth	s. Ric Doo	Exchange. mess late called Bertlotes next ten of Hen Coke [for below]	7264, r 29d
1438	C2013	Ric Doo	s. Ric Smyth	Exchange. 1 a in Gronefurlong [Grove or Grene] [for above]	7264, r 29d
1438	C2017	Ric Doo	s. John Jones out of ct	1 mess ½ v	7264, r 29d
1439	C2051-2	Ric Doo	s. Wm Prince	Exchange: 1 mess and app called Prynce mees	7264, rot 32
1439	C2052	Wm Prince	s. Ric Doo	Exchange: ½ a for above	7264, rot 32

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1439	C2068	Ric Doo	s. John Clere	1 cott and ½ cott and curt and 4 a arable in Totelynche of his ten called Cleres	7264, rot 34
1440	C2060	Ralph Bydell	s. Ric Doo	Exchange: 1 mess called John Jones for below	7264, r 33d
1440	C2061	Ric Doo	s. Ralph Bydell	Exchange: Another mess called Bartelottes	7264, r 33d
1443	C1665	Ric Doo, bailiff	Late Ric Long decd	Homage presents that Doo holds 1 mess 1½ v	7409, rot 3
1445	C1679	Wm Wattes	s. Ric Doo	2 mess of wch 1 called Princes, other Longes	7409, rot 7
1451	C1729	John Benet	s. John Stokys & Cristiana, dau	2 mess 2 x ½ v once John Hatter's	7409, rot 19
1456	C1788	Ric Doo & Ric Rewle [ttees?]	s. Wm Wytewey	1 mess in Westende once John Dewke, and 1 v land meadow leasow & pasture	7409, rot 29
1456	C1794	Ric Doo	s. John Benet	1 mess once Hatteres in Westend next ten of Ric Doo	7409, rot 29
1457	C1819	John Townys-ende, Elen his w, Joan his dau	s. Ric Doo & Ric Rewle	1 mess 1 v once Hen Cook's, late Steph Pertewyn, afterward Wm Whytewey	7409, rot 31d

Wilmot (Wylmote) holdings (Table 5)

In identifying the ownership of the original house, built in the 1330s, the most likely candidates are clearly the Wilmot holdings, since at least one (and probably two) of them stood at the west end of the sequence of properties. In all, three Wilmot or ex-Wilmot holdings (A, B, C) are mentioned from the 1390s up to the 1430s, of which houses (A) and (B) appear to have become part of the Priory. Table 5 summarises their court roll entries.

Two Wilmot families are listed in the 1381 poll tax: Mariot and William Wilmot paying 12d, and Richard and Agnes Wilmot paying 2s.¹⁶ Although the list cannot be demonstrated to be in topographical order, the fact that Mariot and William are second, with Richard and Agnes Wilmot much later, suggests that this could be the case. From the family relationships and the disparity in dates of death revealed by the court rolls, it appears that Richard (d. 1382) was the father of William (fl. 1381-2 and dead by 1386, C2372). Mariot (d 1434) was probably his young widow, and the mother (or stepmother) of William's son John (d. 1386).

Richard died in 1382, leaving William as his son and heir to inherit his messuage and half-virgate (C2364); however, William was himself dead by 1386 when the death of his son John, without an heir, was presented (C2372), holding two messuages and two half-virgates, rather than the three that would have been expected. It appears, therefore, that William's widow, Mariot, had received one of the messuages and its land (A) as her dower.¹⁷ This passed on her death in 1434 to William Vicars and then to Doo (C1912, C1965, C1973).

With John's death, in the absence of heirs, his two messuages and half-virgates (B and C) fell into the lord's hands and would have been re-granted by the lord (explaining the lack of a direct link to the later owners).¹⁸ They then descended separately, (B) passing via Foles to Grete and then to Doo (C2398, C1903, C1981).¹⁹ John Wylmote's third house (C) passed from Robert Pynnock to John Smart, William

¹⁶ TNA, E 179/73/51.

¹⁷ Direct confirmation is not possible, since the court rolls for 1382-6 are lost.

¹⁸ The further gaps in the surviving rolls for 1391-3 and 1395-8 could well have held this re-grant.

¹⁹ The former holder, Fabryan, may have been in possession either soon after 1386, or before 1381. This is the only half-virgate holding known to have been acquired by Grete and so can reasonably be identified with the Wilmot half-virgate that he passed on to his son in 1428.

Wellys and his wife Agnes, and then John Yate and Agnes (who can probably be identified with Wellys' widow) (C2117, C2167, C2178, C1920). Since this property has no connection with either William Grete or Richard Doo it seems likely to have been the house of Richard and Agnes Wilmot that appears to be at a distance from the Priory. It was inherited by William Wilmot in 1382.²⁰

If this sequence is accepted, then the early chamber block belonged originally to house (A), the westernmost house, and in 1381 was occupied by Mariot and William Wilmot, a relatively poor couple to judge from their poll tax assessment, holding only a half-yardland.

Table 5. Wilmot (Wylmote) holdings for houses (A)-(C)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ho</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1382	C	C2364	Wm Wylmot son & h	d. Ric Wylmot	1 mess ½ v	7261, rot 1
1386	B & C	C2372	In hand- heir unknown	d. John son & heir of Wm Wymot	2 mess, 2 [x] ½v	7261, r 3 m 1
1429	A	C1912	Mariot Wylmotes for life	s. Mariot Wylmotes	1 mess ½ v called Wylmotes, then Wm Vycoeyes [Vicars?] of Coluham [Culham]	7264, rot 12
1434	A	C1965	abs	d. Mariot Wylmot	1 mess ½ v by copy	7264, rot 22
1435	A	C1973	Ric Doo	s. Wm Vicarys	1 mess ½ v called Wylmottes	7264, rot 23
1389	B	C2398	Wm Grete	s. Ric Foles	1 mess ½ v once Fabryan	7262, r 14, m 2
1428	B	C1903	Wm for life, then Thos Grete, son	s. Wm Grete	1 mess ½ v called Wylemotes	7264, rot 11
1415	C	C2117	John Smart	s. Rob Pynnok	1 toft and ½ v called Wylmotes	7263, rot 5
1420	C	C2167	Wm Wellys	s. John Smart	1 mess ½ v once called Wylmotes	7263, rot 16d
1421	C	C2178	Agnes his w	s. bef death Wm Wellys	1 mess 1 v once called Wylmots [correctly ½ v?]	7263, rot 21,
1431	C	C1920	John Yate and Agnes his wife	s. John Yate and Agnes his w	1 mess ½v called Wylmotes (re-grant)	7264, rot 15

Building Evidence and Probate Records

It seems clear that Richard Doo's capital message received this title because he carried out the massive enlargements of 1462-3, creating a courtyard mansion by the construction of a new hall and a service or lodging wing. The house emerged from these changes with more chamber and service accommodation than most surviving medieval gentry manor houses in the area, though the hall itself is not exceptionally large. It also appears that in 1443-4 he had already added the north-west block and its small projecting north-east wing, originally with a smart little gable facing eastwards along the causeway.

The partition in 1564 between Richard Snell & Joan Smalbone gives very detailed descriptions of their respective portions, confirming in particular that Joan's part was The Priory (W) and Richard's The Priory (E), as found from the sequence of admissions.

²⁰ The single reference to it as a yardland rather than half-yardland (C2178) appears to be an error.

Joan was to have (C465):

Hall and all parlours (*triclinia*) chambers (*camerata*) and houses (*domus*) and other places (*loca*) on the west part of the house in which the said Joan now lives with gardens or little backsides (*atriolis*) from the entrance (*ab aditu*) of the same mansion westerly (*occidentaliter*) to one small chamber over the gate (*ostium*) towards the street and also a great *cohortem* [for *hortem*? courtyard or garden] and barns stables all other places there and dovecot with the close now situate from ditch extending north and south as far as the stream [*torrent*'] and also that part of a close called Brookheyes close existing on the east side of a ditch and wall existing there northwards and southwards and also access and entry (*introitum*) by the door (*ostiu*') of the hall as far as the partition made in the entry aforesaid lately made [*sic*] and said Joan shall have and keep to self & heirs one close called le Strynge (1 ac) situate near that close called Turne Furlonge eastwards. And moreover the said Joan shall likewise have [left blank] acres of land and 1 a meadow as in the schedule annexed to certain indenture made between said parties 23 Mar 6 Eliz (1564)

Snell's portion comprised (C488):

All houses buildings parlours (*triclinia*) chambers and kitchens (*cogarnas* for *coquinos*) stables and other easements eastwards from the entry of the same mess in which the same parties now live on the north side as far as *vlevan*' [rubbed] part of stable as *remissime* part of wall[?] of the same mess is situated to southward and a small chamber from the entrance of the hall of the said mansion and also all closes on the east side near adjoining the tenement called Brokeheyse and the Pound Close from the limits and bounds of the said closes northwards and also access and ingress from the door of the hall as far as the partition made in the entry (*aditu*) lately made which said entry will be and will remain in common between the said Joan and the said Richard. Moreover the said Richard shall have 56 acres land and 3 acres meadow in divers pieces in Steventon and all other parcells as in the schedule annexed to indentures agreed between the said parties 23 May [*correctly* 23 Mar?] 6 Eliz [1564].

Finally, it is intriguing that in 1713, the Priory was clearly recognised as a notable ancient building, when it was described in the admission of Richard and Anna Pocock as 'the former ancient mansion house of John Smalbone and his ancestors'

Probate records for The Priory (W)

The will of Joan Smalbone, and the wills and inventories of John Smalbone (I), (III) and (IV) relate to this part of the Priory, as do several later wills.

Joan Smalbone of Steventon, widow, 1581.²¹

The provisions for her children in her will have been mentioned above. The will mentions: the innermost chamber in the loft, the one chamber, the other chamber, the hall, 'my loft window', the loft, the stairs up the loft, the parlour (chimney), the kitchen. Presumably, the *loft* refers to the upper floor, rather than an attic floor, since other upper rooms are not mentioned.

John Smalbone (I), the elder, yeoman, 1619.²²

His will recites bequests to four daughters and seven sons (see Table 6(a)).²³ He made particular provision for Mary (£100 secured on a lease of a close called Graslands in Steventon); his son, Edward received the timber in the backside, lying in his two penthouses, and the seven elm trees marked for use

²¹ BRO D/A/1/10, p 261

²² BRO D/A/1/118.

²³ One Edward son of John Smalbone was baptised on 20th May 1604, and another on 19 Jan 1611/12. The latter is too young to be the son referred to in John (II)'s will, and the former is doubtful. However, if John had an older son, Edward, it is surprising that the will did not make the position clearer. It may be, though, that the Edward born in 1604 died before his brother was born in 1611/2, and that the latter had also died, leaving only the inferred elder son alive.

to build a house in Steventon for Elizabeth his wife 'because she hath no house to dwell in, which shall remain to my said son Edw and his heirs which seven trees are now growing in my grounds in Steventon: one in my Brookeheyse close near the corner there towards Mansells house, one stooping elm tree growing in my backside near the Milbrooke, and the other five trees residue growing in my ground called Grasslands.

Property had already been surrendered to his son Richard, from which his wife was not to take dower.

Inventory 15 July 1619, Total £391 5s 6d. Rooms named:

Hall, little house by the hall, parlour, buttery within the parlour, woolhouse, larder, chamber over the parlour, apple loft, servants chamber, chamber over the hall, malt loft, boulting house, kitchen, milkhouse, malthouse, loft over malthouse, barn, backsides, cowhouse, the old stable, the stable, bagside, hoggesty.

John Smalbone (III), the elder, yeoman. 1701.²⁴

He left £400 to all his younger children (Table 6(b)) who, confusingly, replicate almost precisely the Christian names of the previous generation.

Inventory 29 July 1701. Rooms named:

Kitchen; Meale house; Milk house; Cheese loft; Hall; Drink house; Parlor; Best Buttery; Little Buttery; Best Chamber; Apple Loft; Little Chamber; Mens Chamber; Chamber over Hall; Mault house; hovell; Backside; Mault Loft; lumber about the house

John Smalbone (IV), gentleman, 1708/9.

Inventory 3 Jan 1708/9. Rooms named:

Kitchen, meale house, brewhouse, milk house, best beer buttery, hall, little room by the hall, small beer buttery, room over the hall, best Chamber, servants rooms, cheese loft, barley barn, wheat barn, granary, cart house, gate house, mill house, passage as you go up to the kilne.

The Priory (E)

Based on the preceding analysis, and on the Hearth Tax sequence, Anne Stevens, probably the widow of Thomas (d. 1644) lived at The Priory (E) until her death in 1670. Her house paid variously for three or four hearths, while John Smalbone at The Priory (W) paid for four or five hearths.

Anne Stevens, widow, 1670/1.²⁵ Total £190 2s 0d.

The inventory names the following rooms:

Lodging Chamber, Next Chamber, Next Chamber over Butteries, Cheese Loft, Hall, Butteries, Kitchen, Brewhouse, Malt garner

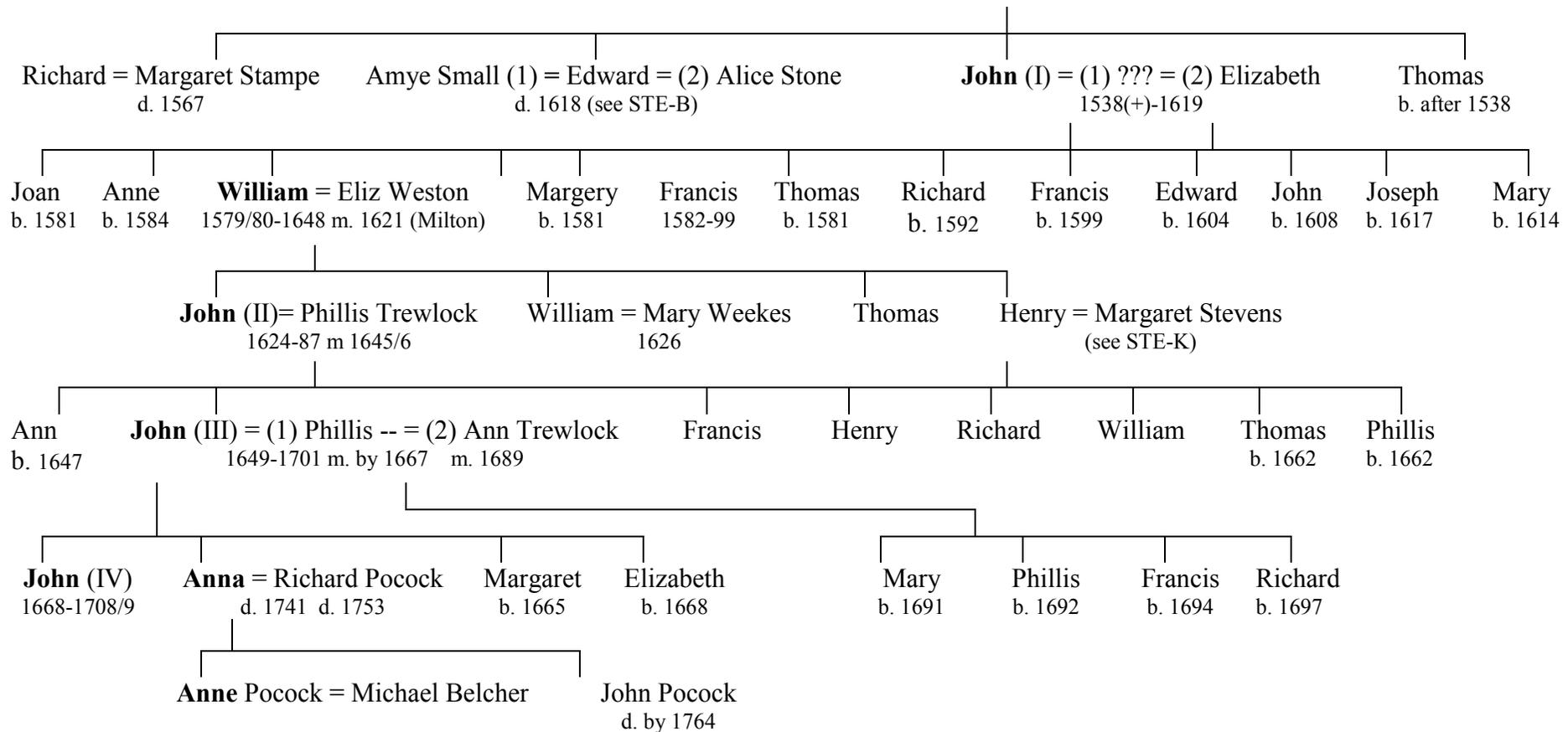
²⁴ Wilts and Swindon Record Office, P1/S/647.

²⁵ BRO, D/A1/121/32.

Table 6(a). Smalbone family tree.

Bold type identifies the holders of The Priory (W).

William Hopkins = (1) **Joan** (2) = Thomas Smalbone
 d. 1527/8 d. 1581 d. 1558



[Some children of John (II) have been added from the Herald's Visitation, which does not give their ages.]

Table 6(b). Junior branch of the Stevens family

For other branches, see STE-H and STE-K. Bold type identifies the probable holders of The Priory (E)

