

Documentary History for
87 The Causeway, Steventon, Oxfordshire
Site Code: STE-H

from

The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England

by

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Fig. 1. View of 87 The Causeway, Steventon from the north (Photo: D. Clark)

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Oxbow Books

STE-H: 87 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.

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The house comprises three timber-framed bays of box-frame construction. The centre bay has a smoke-blackened roof, indicating a former open hall, but the end bays have been greatly altered (Currie (1976, 1992)). The trusses have straight tiebeams and cambered collars with clasped purlins (Fig. 2). A date in the later fifteenth or more probably the early sixteenth century is likely and some evidence suggests a date after 1517 (below). The documentary and map evidence shows that before 1840, the present range formed the eastern wing of a much larger house arranged around a courtyard. It may well have served on occasion as a separate dwelling, as it did in 1803 and 1834.

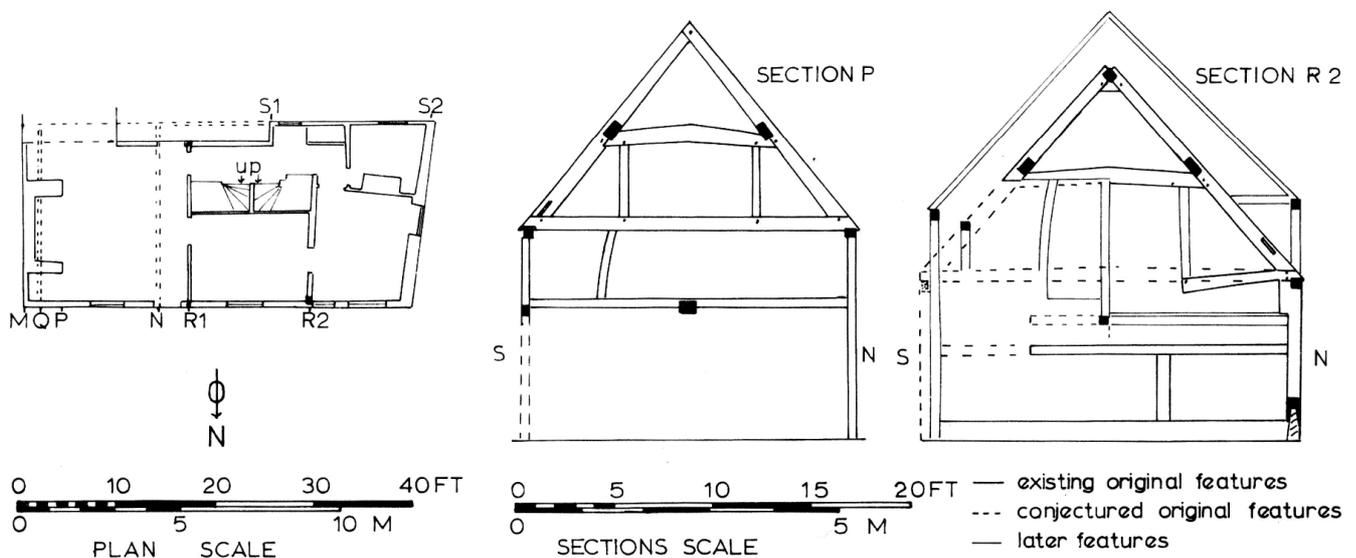


Fig. 2. Plan and sections of 87 The Causeway (from Currie, 1976).

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Summary

This was a copyhold 70 acre farm, known as Box Hedge Farm, that can be traced in the court books from 1664 onwards in the hands of the Stevens family. It remained with them until 1785, though suffering various vicissitudes. After 1835, the house site was partly destroyed by the construction of the Great Western Railway. It had been acquired by William Stevens in 1541, having formerly comprised two holdings known as Webbes and Villers, with respectively a half and full yardland. These two holdings made up the east and west sides of the original farm site.

Location

On the maps of 1842 and 1839 (Fig. 3), the holding comprises plots 14 (the location of the existing building) and 12 (house since demolished), as well as closes and field land. The two houses were respectively owned and occupied by Mary Lyford and J. P. Barlow. They had only come into separate ownership in 1842, and shortly after then the farmstead had been cut through by the Great Western Railway (and it appears, although not stated in the tithe apportionment, that Barlow was a trustee for the GWR). The 1839 map shows the layout of the destroyed buildings.¹



Fig. 3. Extracts from the maps of Steventon: (left) the 1842 Tithe Map; (right) the 1839 map 87 The Causeway is plots 12-14 (1839 map reproduced courtesy of Steventon Parish Council).

Ownership from 1664 (Table 1)

This was holding 43 in the list of copyholdings. The farm was surrendered by John Smalbone to Thomas Stevens (III) in 1664, when it paid £2 9s 6d in rent and consisted of:

the messuage where Thomas Stevens lived; land of John Smalbone (north) and widow Weston's house (west), with Cotterills Croft; Yelding Furlong Croft; sheep house; 70 ac arable. (rent reduced to £2 7s 6d by 1696, as Cotterills Croft had been disposed of).

It remained in the hands of the Stevens family (Table 4) until 1785, although its tenure was far from uneventful. It was the subject of cases in Chancery in 1765 and there and in Kings Bench in 1776-7,

¹ The building layout is also shown on the deposited railway plan (Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/PB/3/Plan 106).

between Samuel Stevens of Purton, Wiltshire and Elizabeth Moss and others.² The Chancery bills recited the admission in 1696 of Thomas Stevens (IV), on the surrender of his father. The younger Thomas died in 1706 (his father not until 1717), leaving a son, Thomas (V), and daughter Anne. This Thomas died in 1730, and his sister Anne was admitted. However, she was declared to be a lunatic and so should not have been admitted at all. The inheritance therefore devolved on the children of Francis Stevens (I), second son of Thomas (I). This Francis's sons were Samuel (the plaintiff), Thomas (who had gone abroad) and Francis (II), who asked to be recognised as Anne's heir. The defendants' case rested on Samuel being illegitimate, born before his parents had married.

However, Samuel won the case and in 1777 surrendered the farm to his son Thomas Stevens of Brentford, Middlesex; the latter died in 1780, leaving the property to his wife Mary for life.³ Presumably Thomas had no children, and it was to pass after her death to James Louch, son of James and Mary Louch, described as living with Thomas Stevens, on condition that he supported his mother. Although no family connection has been established, he was perhaps a nephew or somewhat more distant relative.⁴ Mary apparently died soon after her husband and James was admitted in 1785; however, he sold both the freehold and copyhold land to Robert Lyford in 1786 for £1,588 [admitted to the copyhold in 1788].⁵

Robert Lyford's son, another Robert, died in 1834, with considerable debts, and his estate was the subject of several Chancery suits in the ensuing years, brought by his heirs against the executors for fraud or incompetence in the realisation of his assets.⁶ Mary Lyford was bequeathed a cottage and garden for life under Robert's will. They later passed to Thomas Stevens (not a direct descendant of the earlier family), who also acquired the freeholding 99 The Causeway (STE-G, TM 10) from Lyford's estate.

Table 1. Admissions, 1664-1842.

Date	Adm	To	From	Descr	Rent
1664	11	Thomas Stevens	s. John Smallbone	<i>See text</i>	£2 9s 6d
1696	227	Thomas Stevens	s. Thomas Stevens	Messuage & 70 ac	£2 7s 6d
1713	335	Thomas Stevens	d. Thos Stevens (IV)	<i>same</i>	
1733	432	Catherine Stevens [widow of Thos (IV)]	d. Thos Stevens (V)	[As guardian of Ann?]	
1764	605 3/47	Ann Stevens, dau,	d. Catherine Stevens	[by Samuel Stevens, attorney]	
1776	685 3/149	Coheirs, Eliz Moss & others	d. Ann Stevens		

² 1776-6: TNA, C 12/1984/10 Stevens v. Moss; C 12/2107/38, Moss v. Stevens; for KB case, see a brief in C103/92; it concerned wrongful ejection of Samuel Stevens's tenant, Richard Goodright by Elizabeth Moss and others, the brother and sisters of Samuel, who claimed to be the rightful owners of the farm. The 1765 Chancery case is also referred to in C103/92. Notably, the court books make no mention of any of these events, simply recording admissions following the deaths of Thomas Stevens in 1730, of his widow, Catherine in 1764, and of Anne in 1776, although then both the coheirs and Samuel Stevens were admitted independently, the court book index noting that Samuel was admitted in order to test his ownership at law.

³ TNA, PROB 11/1062, f. 42, will of Thomas Stevens of Old Brentford, Middlesex. He included a bequest to his attorney, James Harrison, of £100 for 'his assiduity and extraordinary care and trouble in recovery of the estates of my father Samuel Stevens'.

⁴ Thomas's will includes bequests of £50 to Mary Louch and to her sister Elizabeth Glead. The latter may well be the Elizabeth Stevens, marrying Thomas Glead on 9 May 1767 at St Leonards, Shoreditch.

⁵ A recital of the descent is given in TNA, C103/92.

⁶ TNA C 13/394/9 (Stevenson v. Cowdery & others); C 13/1207/2 (Dandridge v. Smith).

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Descr</i>	<i>Rent</i>
1777	694	Thomas Stevens	s. Samuel Stevens		
1782	737	Mary Stevens, wife	d. Thomas Stevens		
1785	747	James Loach	d. Mary Stevens; will of Thomas Stevens		
1788	752	Robert Lyford	s. James Loach	messuage, barns, 70ac Eyling croft	£2 7s 6d
1803	4/21	Robert Lyford, son	d. Robert Lyford	<i>same as 1788</i>	
1827	4/206	John Keates	s. Robert Lyford	Conditional surrender (satisfied in 1843)	
1843	4/370	Robert Smith, etc. (Trustees of Robert Lyford's will)	d. Robert Lyford (1834) (refers to Chancery decree, Stevenson v. Smith)	Messuage (was Box Hedge Farm), Causeway (S) barns stables orch backside; 72 ac arable, Eling Croft; GWR through homestead	£2 7s 6d
1842	4/318	Lyford, Mary	d. Robert Lyford	Cottage, gdn occ. Mary Lyford, (late occ. John Challis).	[part of £2 7s 6d]

Ownership 1546-1664 (Table 2)

Although the house was in the hands of John Smalbone in 1664 before passing to Thomas Stevens, Smalbone was in reality only a trustee, admitted only in 1661 (C260, C290), and the house had been one of the main Stevens family houses since 1546, belonging to the branch of the family descended from William Stevens (II), 'the elder'. The family tree for this branch is shown in Table 4.⁷

The family was established in Steventon by William Stevens (I) who began buying land there in 1541. Part of his estate, including two messuages known as Webbes and Villers, was surrendered before his death (c. 1546-7) to his younger son, William Stevens (II) 'the elder' (C1095) and can be followed thereafter in the court rolls (Table 2).⁸ The latter died as bailiff of Steventon in 1587; his will makes provision for the property he had bought, including a house bought from Stamp and left to his son Richard, freeholds in Sutton left to the elder of his two sons called John, and land bought from Thomas Smalbone left to three younger sons; but his inherited estate was left to his eldest surviving son Thomas (I) (C602-13). This Thomas was also bailiff (recorded in 1604) and is later found owning or selling some of his father's purchased property, presumably buying off the brothers to whom it had been left. The main holding, together with some further acquisitions of land, passed in 1631 to his eldest son Edward, who settled it in 1640 (after his mother Elizabeth's death in 1638) on his son and heir, Thomas (II) (C246). The description given then clearly identifies it as holding described in 1664. This Thomas made leases of his property first in favour of his wife Mary after his death, and then in favour of Alice Stevens for her life: the leases are not incompatible and Alice (d 1664) was probably Edward's widow. William Groves, the predecessor of John Smalbone, whose admission is also recorded in 1661 (the post-Commonwealth 'catch-up' court) was probably a trustee for Alice.

⁷ The family is of great complexity and at any one time more than one William or John Stevens was usually producing children. Thus, the parental relationships are often uncertain, but the evidence of wills, and the fact that two children of, say, 'William', baptised within a few months of each other, cannot belong to the same William, help reduce the uncertainty.

⁸ The family also owned several other substantial properties in the village, notably the eastern half of The Priory (STE-F, q.v.)

Table 2: Admissions 1546-1664

Year	Adm	To	From	Premis	WAM
1546	C1095	Wm Stevyns son of sd Wm and heirs. Under age, Edw Tyrrell, uncle, guardian	s. Wm Stevyns out of court [pre death?]	Including meadow & pasture of 1v, pt of mess called Plumers and Hyggins (21 Hen 7); pt of 2 mess and 13½ a land late Rob Nicholles (2 Hen 8); 1 mess called Webbes and 8 a [...] (15 Hen 7). 1 mess called Villers , All by s. Hen Wyntershull at last court	7412, rot 41d
1548		[survey – added entry]	William Stevens	Two mess, land, meadow and pasture, late held by his father William as by court 1546 [C1095]. Rent 50s 7½d	7459
1588	C602	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	24 arable and a parcel [or pedell]	7419, rot 1
1588	C603	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	1a Merefurlong*	7419, rot 1
1588	C604	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	1 close Bruckleys [? Brookheys]	7419, rot 1
1588	C605	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	2 pieces called Oridges about 4 a in Pugsden; 1 a Huntfurlong; 2 headlands on 1 a at Hobyard; ½ a at Chanksoed[??] 1 a on hill(more details); 2a Incheland; 1a Totledge; cowlease and common for 60 sheep	7419, rot 1
1588	C606	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	6 a arable with meadow and pasture of ½v of land. Rent 3s 8d	7419, rot 1
1588	C607	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	8 a (details) , apparently another 8 a and 1 a	7419, rot 1
1588	C608	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	8 other acres parcell of 2 messuages Plomers and Higgins	7419, rot 1
1588	C609	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	3 acres; ½ a parcell of 2 mess and 13 ½ a late Rob Nicholls	7419, rot 1
1588	C610	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	Mess called Webbys and 8 a arable with meadow and pasture of ½ a in certain close called mooreclose	7419, rot 1
1588	C611	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	1 a in masterfurlonge parcel of 6 a	7419, rot 1
1588	C612	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	1 mess called Villers, 10 a 3 r	7419, rot 1
1588	C613	Thomas Stevens	d. Wm Stevens	1 a late John Yate, , 1 a late John Townsend, 1 parcell of Orpid [previous tenement]	7419, rot 1
1588	C615	Joan Stevens for life, then Thos and heirs	s. Thos Stevens	2 pieces cont 4 a in Pugsden, 1 other a in huntfurlong, 2 headlands in hovyard ..1/2 a...1 a...2 a ..1 a.. pasture for 1 cow and common for 60 sheep. Rent 15s 3d	7419, rot 1d

<i>Year</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Premis</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1641	C246	Thos Stevens son & heir	s. Ed Stevens 10 Aug 1640	Messuage in which Ed Stevens now lives, 69 a arable, 1 croft in Yeelingfurling cont est 6 a, 1 small close and horreum and 2 ovin [?sheephouses] built on it, 7½ a meadow in high meadow shorte mede and Binditch, pasture 6 cows and 160 sheep. Rent 46s 6½	7420, rot 3
1641	C180	Ric Pocock sen gent & Ric Pocock, junior	Ed Stevens & Thos Stevens	Lease to trustees of messuage and all lands belonging to it, to use of Mary wife of Thos Stevens for 59 years after his death if she lives so long	7420, rot 3
1646/7		[rental]		Thos Stevens, junior. Rent 16s	7347
1661	C186	John Thatcher of Shippon, Ric Burrowes of Alscot, Alice Rivers of Shippon	Thos. Stevens of Steventon gent	Lease to trustees of divers tenements for life of Alice Stevens [probably mother of Thomas]	7421, rot 1
1661	C260	John Smalbone	s. Willielmus Grove	messuage in which Thomas Stevens lives and 69 a. arable and one agell (?) in yelding [Eling] furlong cont 6 a. And one racen' (?) close and barn and 2 sheephos there built; 7 ½ a. Meadow in Highmead Shortmead & benditch [bindage]; common pasture for 6 cows and 160 sheep	7421, rot. 2
1661	C290	John Smalbone	s. Wm. Grove out of court	[n.d.] close of 6 a., 2 customary tenements, 1 messuage in which Thomas Stevens lives or lived, 69 a. arable in common field and close in yelding furlong cont 6 a., another close on wch. 2 sheephouses built; 7 ½ a meadow in highmead shortmead and Benditch, common for 6 cows	7421, rot. 6

Ownership before 1546 (Table 3)

The houses and land given by William Stevens (I) to William (II) in 1546 had been acquired by him in the same year (C1086). The two houses which it then included, Webbes and Villers, can be traced back to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively. Villers is named from Robert Fyller, who attained his majority in 1398 and was chief tithingman of Westend in 1417; his holding comprised two messuages and two virgates inherited from his father and grandfather, though only one house is mentioned thereafter. Thus, Villers may have been a double plot by 1423 (C2385; C2405; C2422). It lay immediately east of the freehold held by Thomas Plomer in 1423, which was the eastern half of Botleys, (STE-G, 99 The Causeway) (abuttal in C1872). Villers therefore formed the western part of 87 The Causeway. It passed to John Plomer in 1456, briefly to Joan and John Sexton in 1482 (C1595) and was then acquired by John Hopkins in 1485 (C1122).

That Webbes was the eastern part of the holding is confirmed by the remarkable presentment in the court for 1483 about its owner carrying off part of the Villers building, as discussed below (C1605). The first direct evidence for Webbes as part of this site is the surrender in 1499 by Henry Winchester to

William Hopkins of a messuage called Webbes, a second messuage east of the brook and 8 acres (C1267). Several earlier admissions refer to Webbes as a messuage and half virgate. This was presumably one of the three houses that passed to Robert and Agnes Nicoll on the death of Alice Webbe (C2177, 2181, 1745, 1750, 1802, 1860, 1366), but the admission of Henry Winchester to it is lost, although by 1528 former Nicoll property was associated with the holding (C887).⁹ In 1499 (C1267), Webbes passed to William Hopkyns, whose father John already owned Villers, and they passed together to Richard Wyntersell in 1524 (C887), to his son Henry in 1528 and from him to William Stevyns in 1546.

Table 3. Admissions from 1388 to 1546 to houses on site of 87 The Causeway and the adjoining house.

(a) Villers house

Date	Adm	To	From	Property	WAM
1388	C2385	John Fyller son & heir	d. John Fyller	1 mess 1 v	7261, rot 8
1390	C2405	In hand during minority of son Robert	d. John Fyllar ⁹	1 mess 1 v	7261, rot 15, m 2d
1398	C2422	Robert Fyller son & heir of John Fylare <i>et suis</i> [heirs]	Lord	2 mess 2 v land called Fyllars	7261, rot 24
1417	C2139	Robert Lyford, Robert Fyller		Eastend and Westend chief tithingmen	7263, rot 11
1423	C1872	Claim Thomas Plomer of Oxford in right of his wife	Agnes his wife, daughter of Adam Lhodes & Maud Halfmannes	[<i>Abuttal from STE-G</i>] Freehold 1 mess and curt late Ric Wynterborne de Grove once Adam Lhowdes between Rob Fyller's to E and Rob Godesdays to W	7264, rot 1
1456	C1792	John Plomer	s. Stephen Petewyn out of court	1 mess and garden adj once Rob Vyllers	7409, rot 29
1466	C1417	Alice his wife, and her heirs and assigns	s. John Plomer before death	1 mess called Vyllers, 10 a ½ r late John Doo, 1 a late John Yate, 1 a late John Bryghtelton, 6 a late John Collys jun, 6 a late John Townysend, 1 a parcell of land of Orpyddys	7410, rot 7
1482	C1595	Joan now wife of John Sexton daughter and nearest heir of Alice	s. Alice wife of John Plomer	1 mess called Villers and 10 a 1½r land late John Doo, 1 a late John Yate, 1 a late John Brightelton, 6 a late John Collys, 6a late Thos Townsend and 1 a parcel of Orpyddes, granted to Alice by lord [in 1466, C1417]	7410, rot 24d
1485	C1122	John Hopkyns, partly after death of Alice Sharpe	s. John Sexten and Joan his w, dau and heir of John Plomer	1 ten and appurts called Villers; reversion of 1 mess and 8 a called Plommers; reversion of 1 mess and appurts called Hugons. To hold after death of Alice, wife of John Sharpe	7411, rot 2d

⁹ It might be represented by his acquisition of a messuage and land from Anna Symmes in 1485 (C1131) previously belonging to John Mychell of Abingdon (C1116). However, the evidence of the damage done in 1483 implies that Henry already owned Webbes.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1494	C1228	John Hopkyns and Agnes his w and heirs of John	s. John Hopkyns	1 mess and garden late John Bull [?] and 1 ten and appurts called Villers, reversion of 1 mess and 8 a land and appurts called Plomers, and reversion of another mess called Hygons after death of Alice wife of John Sharpe	7411, rot 13d
1510	C773	Wm Hopkyns his son	s. John Hopkins	Mess called Willers [=Villers], 10 a 3 r late Jn Doo, 1 a late John Yate, 1 a late Jn Britelton, 6 a late John Collys jun, 6a late Jn Townesend, 1 a parcel of land called Orpildes [Orpyds] by copy [C1122]	7412, rot 2

(b) Webbs house

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1421	C2177	Ric Webbe, Wm Webbe & John Smart	s. bef death Thos Hawkyns	1 mess ½ v called Hobbeagneys [entry largely illegible]	7263, rot 21, m 2d
1421	C2181	Wm Webbe	s. Wm Whyte	1 mess ½ v	7263, rot 21, m 2d
1452	C1745	[abs]	d. Wm Webbe	½ v	7409, rot 22
1452	C1750	Agnes his w for life then heirs of Wm	s. before death by Wm Webbe	1 mess and ½ v	7409, rot 22d
1456	C1802	Ric Webbe son & h of Thos Webbe	d. Agnes Webbe	1mess ½ v	7409, rot 30
1460	C1860	Alice his wife	s. bef death Ric Webbe	1 mess ½ v. remainder to Agnes wife of Thos Nycoll, daughter of said Ric Webbe; if she dies without heirs of body, remainder to Rob Smerte	7409, rot 36d
1462	C1366	Robert son of Thos Nicoll, and Agnes his w dau & h	d. Alice Webbe	3 mess 1 v late Ric Webbe	7410, rot 2d
1485	C1131	Hen Wynchester	s. Anna Symmes wid	1 messuage 4 a meadow & pasture of ½v	7411, rot 3
1499	C1267	Wm Hopkyns	s. Hen Wynchester	1 mess called Webbes, 1 mess lying on E side of le Broke once John Stevyngton, 8 a in fields [details] with meadow and pasture of ½v	7411, rot 20

(c) Houses together

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1482	C1596			Henry Wynchester of Abingdon, draper & others assaulted John Cokkes of Steventon on St Osmonds Day 22 Ed IV [22 July 1482] so his life was despaired of	7410, rot 25
1483	C1605			Theft and encroachment by Henry Wynchester [See text]	7410, rot 25d

<i>Date</i>	<i>Adm</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>Property</i>	<i>WAM</i>
1524	C887	Ric Wyntersell	Wm Hopkins	Land [details] parcel of a messuage called Plomeres and ..[deleted] Hyggyns; land [details] late Robert Mool [Nicol?]; 1 messuage called Webbys and 8 ac [details]; one inclosure called morresclose; parcel of 6 ac late in tenure of Bernardes; 1 mess called Villerres; other lands [details, late of other tenants]	WAM 7412, rot 15d
1526	C919	Hen Wyntersell	s. Ric Wyntersell	2 mess, 1 inclosure, 71a 3 r land, pasture [partly illegible]	WAM 7412, rot 19
1526	C926	Proclamation	Late Ric Wyntersell	2 mess and 60 a late Ric Wyntersell's	WAM 7412, rot 20
1528	C962	Hen Wyntersell	Former s. of Ric Wintersell	4 mess, one called Plomeres with meadow & pasture of ½ v belonging, another called Webbys with meadow and pasture of 1 v belonging, another mess called Villeres and a [lands] called Hyggyns; an inclosure called Morreclose and 63 a 3 r land belonging to the same messuages which Richard surrendered to Henry.	WAM 7412, rot 22d
1546	C1086	William Stevyns	s. Henry [damaged] [Wyntershull] out of court	1 a in mastfurlong..copy 16 Hen 7; 8 a..3 Hen 8; 1 a 3 Hen 8; 8a, meadow & pasture of 1v, parcel of mess called Plumers and Hyggins as 21 Hen 7; 3 a 1 Ric 3; more a, parcel of 2 mess and 13½ a land late Rob Nicholles as by 2 Hen 8; 1 mess called Webbes and 8 a ...[in fields with meadow and pasture of ½ v as by] 15 Hen 7; Inclosure called Moureclose 9 hen 8. 1 a in mass furlong parcel of 6 a late in ten of Bernard as by ct 9 Hen 8; 1 MESS called Vyllers, 10 a 3 r land late John Doo, 1a late John Yate, 1 a late John Byrtylton, 6 a late John Scollys jun, 6 a late John Townesend, 1 a late parcel of land of Orpydes as by roll 1 Ric 3 and 2 Hen 8; all which prems he late had by surr of Ric Wynteshall his/their father as in ct after hockday [day not given] 17 ct afsd K [? Hen 8]	WAM 7412, rot 39d

Building evidence

One of the most remarkable presentments in the court rolls relating to any of the Steventon houses is that in 1483 (C1605), when Henry Winchester, the owner of Webbes was reported to have broken and carried off:

one 1 bayewindowe late standing in the house of John Sexten (i.e. Villers, held by Sexten briefly after 1482).

He had also carried off a pigsty (*domum porcinum*) and took 6 planks and two doors belonging to John.

Furthermore, part of Henry's house, *le Parlor* encroached (apparently) on the lord's land by three feet, and his longhouse (*domus longa*) and barn (*orreum*) encroached by two feet, but that no rent was being paid for them. We cannot tell just what quarrell between neighbours lay behind the first circumstances, though a preceding entry (C1596) shows Henry taking part in a life-threatening assault on one John Cokkes of Steventon. Thus, Villers had a *bay window*, presumably an oriel, and Webbes had a parlour, barn and 'longhouse'. The parlour (projecting onto the lord's land) is likely to have been in a west cross wing, like others in Steventon, presumably extending towards the Causeway, although the barn and 'longhouse' might have stood on the side of the holding along Little Lane.

A further building reference that seems to belong to Webbes comes from the *Domesday of Inclosures* of 1517. In these presentments, William Hopkins was said to have allowed a house which he held with 40 acres to be demolished, on 6 July 1499, which then went uncultivated.¹⁰ Although no Hopkins holding precisely fits this description, it probably it refers to Webbes since this is the only property William is known to have owned at that date. The absence of a house in 1517, suggests that the present building dates from shortly after then.

Probate records

This holding features extensively in inventories although it seems likely that they relate primarily to the large courtyard house mostly destroyed by the railway, and that the existing building, which appears to be a self-contained dwelling, was separately occupied, so that its rooms are not named.

The inventory of Thomas Stevens (IV) the younger, gentleman, 16 Jan 1706/7, with a total value of £1,168, is particularly significant.¹¹ It gives a clear view of what was clearly a very substantial house, listing fifteen rooms, followed by two farm buildings, then the malthouse, brewhouse and storage lofts. These are followed by further farm buildings and the dovehouse, before it recites another group of domestic buildings, which might be thought to refer to another house; however since they include the kitchen and milkhouse, which are not in the first section, they are more likely to form a separate part of the main structure. Indeed, the whole list is fully consistent with both the domestic and agricultural buildings being arranged around a courtyard, as the 1839 plan indicates. The final 'sheephouse barn' must have been away from the village centre, as these buildings stood out in the fields, and this particular one is mentioned in the admissions after some of the closes.

The full list of rooms and buildings in the order enumerated comprises:

Chamber over kitchen; Best Chamber and Nursery; Chamber next best chamber; Hanged Chamber; Next Chamber; On the Staircase (clock); Chamber over the Hall; Mens Chamber; Cheese Chamber; Parlor; Hall; Pantry; First Cellar; Best Cellar; Stable; Carthouse; Malthouse; Brewhouse; Corn Loft; Mault Loft; Granary by the Kilne; Reekyarde; In and about the Old Shopp; Wheat Barn; Old Barn; Chaffhouse; New Barn; Orchard; Pigsty; Backside (including the Dovehouse); Milkhouse; Little Room by Entry; Court; Dish-house; Kitchen; Sheephouse barn.

Over the next 120 years, we also have the wills of Thomas Stevens of Old Brentford (see above) and of Robert Lyford, father and son.¹² That of Robert Lyford, d. 1803, is significant since it bequeathed 'the Cottage now occupied by John Gearing and adjoining to the Boxhedge Farmhouse' to his wife Sarah, if she chose to live on her own rather than with his son.

¹⁰ Leadam, I S 1897. *The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517-1518*, Royal Historical Society, vol. I, 132.

¹¹ BRO DA1/215/181. His widow, Catherine Stevens, renounced and administration was granted to Margaret Smalbone.

¹² Thomas Stevens, 1780, TNA, PROB 11/1062; Robert Lyford, 1803: BRO, D/A1/156/31; Robert Lyford, 1834, TNA, PROB 11/1844.

Prior to this, the following inventories or wills naming rooms appear to relate to the house:¹³

Thomas Stevens (1631) [room names in will]: Chamber over the Seller; Loft over the Hall; Gallery; Chamber over the Kitchen; my Chamber; Loft over the Kitchen [*same as Chamber?*]

Elizabeth Stevens (1638): Bedchamber; Chamber over the Hall; Chamber over the Kitchin; Kitchin; Seller; Mealehouse; Ould Kitchin; Cockloft; Wheate Loft; Milkehouse; Wheate Barne; Barley Barne;

Alice Stevens (1664): Lodging Chamber; Loft over Hall; Loft over cellar; Chese Loft; Loft over Parler; Apple Loft; Milkhouse; Mealhouse; Hall; Parlour; Seller; Kitchen; Bacon Loft; Brewhouse

However, these do not match the inventory of William Stevens (d 1587), which names:

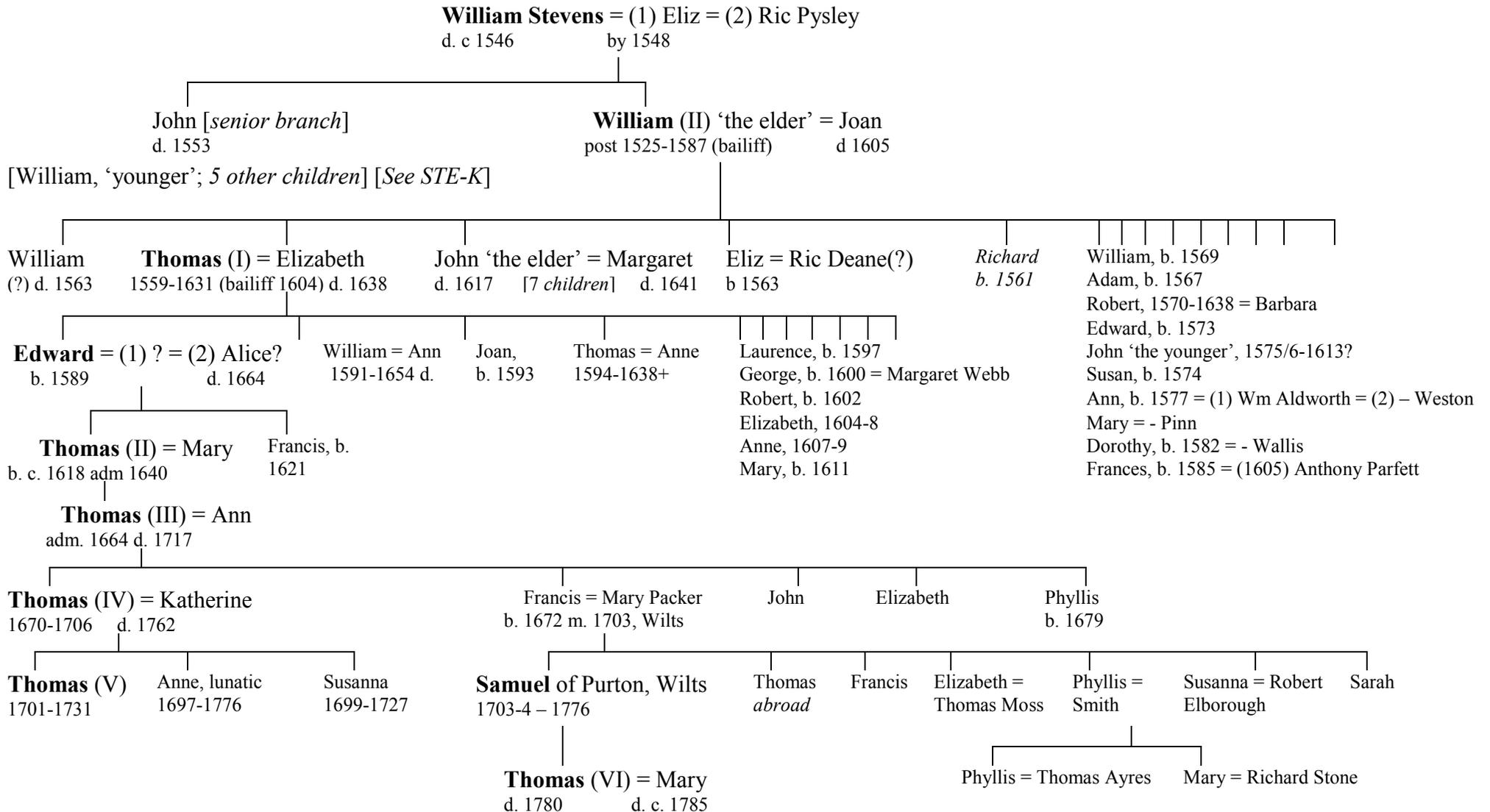
Halle; Parlor; Best Chamber; Second Chamber; Other Chamber; Servants Chamber; Maides Chamber; Kitchen; Butterie.

He had perhaps handed over 87 The Causeway to his son and was living in one of his other houses. Neither the will nor the inventory of his widow, Joan (d. 1605) give any room names.¹⁴

¹³ The inventories might relate to the Stevens part of the Priory (STE-F), but this is unlikely, since they differ from the inventory of Anne Stevens (d 1670), who is known to have lived there.

¹⁴ William Stevens, 1587, BRO D/A1/212; Joan Stevens, 1605, BRO, D/A1/116; Thomas Stevens, 1631, BRO, D/A1/16, p. 252; Elizabeth Stevens, 1638, BRO, D/A1/119; Alice Stevens, widow, 1664, BRO, D/A1/120/133 (mentioning Thomas Stevens as her son-in-law, rather than her son).

Table 4. Stevens family. Descent from William Stevens 'the elder'. Owners of Holding 43 are in bold.



Sources: Printed parish register; original register 1558-99 (BL Harl MS 2395); additional details from wills (BRO and WAM); *Acts of D & C of Westm 1543-1609, parts i and ii*; 1609-1642 (Westminster Abbey Rec Soc vols i, 1997, ii, 1999, v, 2006); rentals and court rolls (WAM).