

Report and Documentary History for
12 Milton Lane, Steventon, Oxfordshire

Site Code: STE-K

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-K: 12 MILTON LANE, STEVENTON, OXFORDSHIRE

Grid reference: SU 4727 9202

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| <i>Illustrations:</i> | <i>Page</i> |
| 1. View of the house | 1 |
| 2. Ground floor plan | 2 |
| 3. Extracts from the 1839 and 1842 maps of Steventon | 7 |
| <i>Tables</i> | |
| 1. Admissions:1664-1887 | 8 |
| 2. Admissions 1541-1664 | 9 |
| 3. Admissions 1475-1540 | 10 |
| 4. Family tree of the senior branch of the Stevens family | 21 |

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

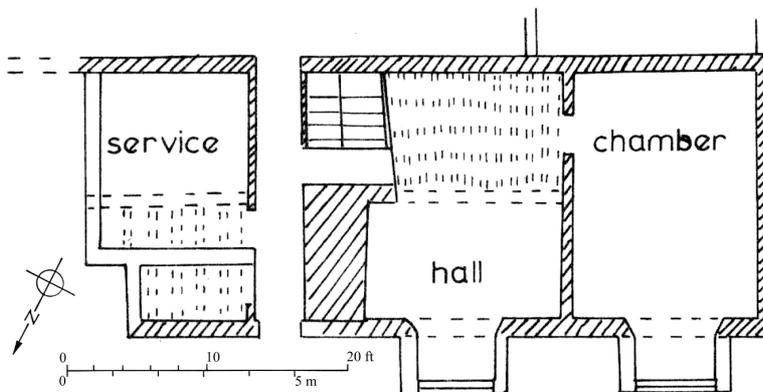


Fig. 2. Plan (from Currie (1976)).

SUMMARY ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The basic structure of the house is late medieval, probably of about 1500. It comprises a central hall, service bay and high-end chamber, of 1½ storeys with a queen-post roof. The walls have been rebuilt in rubble masonry and a stone chimney has been inserted into the hall, backing onto the cross-passage; this may have been preceded by a smoke bay.

DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Summary

This holding is first identified in 1475, in the hands of William Baker. In 1541, it was acquired by William Stevens and it remained with this family until Margaret Stevens married Henry Smalbone in 1660. It was almost immediately sold to Francis Hopkins and remained with his family until 1707. The house and its remaining land passed to the Stacey family in 1726.

Location

This is plot 130 on the Tithe map (Fig. 2), with the adjoining orchard (TM131) owned and occupied by William Cox. It is readily identified as the only copyhold property in his ownership in 1842 (holding 29 in the c. 1800 and 1890 indexes), and it can be traced in the court books from 1664 until it was enfranchised in 1887.

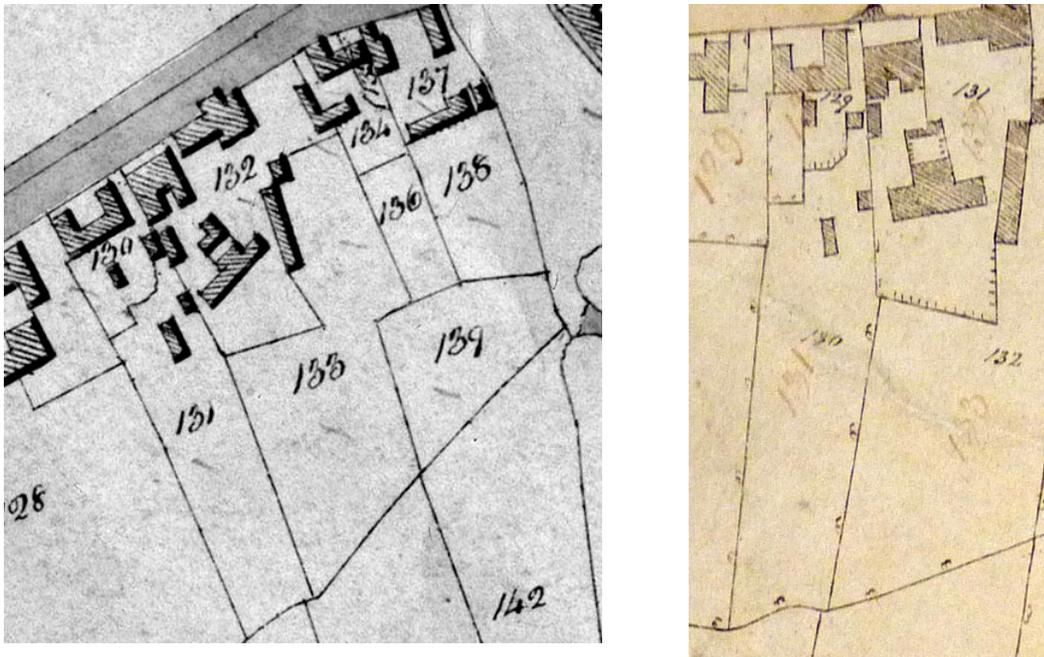


Fig. 2. Extracts from the 1842 and 1839 maps of Steventon: (a, left) the 1842 Tithe Map; (b, right) the 1839 map

12 Milton Lane is plot 130 (1842) or 131 (1839)
(1839 map reproduced courtesy of Steventon Parish Council).

History after 1664 (Table 1)

The first admission, recorded in 1664, was of Francis Hopkins on the surrender of Henry Smalbone (in 1661), of a messuage with ten acres of land, paying a rent of 8s 1d. The reversion passed to Thomas Hopkins (Francis's son?) immediately before Francis's death and it was then held for her life by Maria, the wife of Richard White.¹ Maria White paid the rent of 10s 9d in the 1696 rental, preceded in the list by Richard White, her husband, paying 18s 2d, which appears to relate to the family's main holding, Pound House, 23 Causeway (index 94); in 1686, Richard White paid a single sum of £1 8s 11d. Although the ownership reverted to Thomas Hopkins on Mary White's death in 1701 (*Reg*), the house seems to have continued to be occupied by Richard White junior until his death in 1717.

The holding included some meadow and 10 acres of arable, but most of the land was disposed of in 1720, before the house and its remaining land passed to the Stacey family in 1726. After its sale by John Stacey in 1803, it passed through a number of hands before its enfranchisement.

Table 1. Admissions: 1664-1887

References headed *Adm* are to the numbered list of admissions in WAM 57045; others are to volume and page of the court books, or to compiled lists of admissions.

| <i>Adm</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Descr</i> | <i>Rent</i> |
|------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|---|-------------|
| 3 | 1664 | Hopkins, Francis | s. Hen Smalbone | 20 Nov 1661. mess between houses of James Stone [Home Farm, STE-L] & Richard Hopkins [10 Milton Lane] | 8s 1d |

¹ She seems likely to have been Thomas's daughter, possibly the Mary Hopkins baptised in 1637.

| <i>Adm</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Descr</i> | <i>Rent</i> |
|------------|-------------|---|---|--|--------------------|
| 69 | 1671 | Hopkins, Thomas after d. Francis | s. Francis Hopkins [Binditch, rent 2s 8d, separate surrender of father, Francis] | Mess where Francis Hopkins lives, barn, stable armentariis (<i>Anglice cowhouses</i>), 10 ac, purchased from Henry Smalbone; Bindich | 8s 1d 2s 8d |
| 106 | 1677 | White, Maria, rev to Hopkins, Thomas, jun | s. Thos Hopkins, sen | Mess where TH lives, ho & land James Stone, sen (N) 10 ac, md | 10s 9d |
| 1/345 | 1707 | Cooke, John | s. Thos Hopkins of Abingdon | 5 Jan 1706. Mess where Rich White lives & 10 ac | 10s 9d |
| 2/16 | 1717 | Lyford, Robt | s. Cooke, John | As last | 10s 9d |
| 280 | | | s. Robt Lyford | ¼ ydl [lands lost] | 5s] |
| 404 | 1726 | Stacey, John | s. Robt Lyford | Mess, was occ Rich White; 2 cows common [2/74] | 5s 9d 1d |
| 3/130 | 1773 | John Stacey, junior | d. John Stacey, senior | [<i>same</i>] | |
| 3/318 | 1794 | John Stacey, junior | d. John Stacey, senior | | |
| 4/22 | 1803 | Robert Lyford | s. John Stacey | | |
| 4/36 | 1804 | Joseph Godfrey of Steventon, baker | s. Robert Lyford | | |
| H021 | 1812 | Robert Allen | s. Joseph Godfrey | Cond surr. Satisfied 1847 | |
| 4/151 | 1818 | Wm Cox | s. Joseph Godfrey | For £350 (£300 from R Allen) | |
| 4/431 | 1848 | John Hazell | s. William Cox | Conditional surrender for loan £220 | |
| 5/123 | 1855 | Mary Cox | d. William Cox | Will of Wm Cox. 1ac arable & mess formerly Ric White | 5s 9d |
| | | | | [further transactions] | |
| H037 | 1887 | | | Enfranchised | |

Pre-1664 (Tables 2-3)

The 1645-6 rental shows Francis Stevens, paying 28s in the corresponding position in the list to Richard White in 1686 and his wife in 1696. In the 1590 rental, this can plausibly be correlated with the 29s paid by William Stevens (Francis's grandfather), although that rental is not in topographical sequence. Furthermore, the succession is clear from Francis to the Henry Smalbone who sold the property in 1661, since in 1660 Henry married Margaret Stevens, the daughter of Francis. The latter's holding appears to have been divided between his daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth, although the loss of the relevant court rolls from this period prevents full confirmation of their succession. Henry held the lease of half the Rectory Farm and probably rented 55-57 the Causeway from the Ayshcombe family, where the Hearth Tax returns suggest that he was living.² Thus, a smallish copyholding might not have been of great interest to him and he (with Margaret's agreement) would have been ready to sell it. The later history of the other half of the holding (which probably included the dower house noted below) has not been identified. Most plausibly, Francis Stevens would have given both parts to trustees for the two sisters at some date between 1646 and 1660, when the court rolls are missing.

We can follow back what appears to be the same property in the hands of the Stevens family (Table 4) to its acquisition by Francis's great-great-grandfather, William Stevens (I), from Robert Ryme in

² From the sequence in the largely topographical listing, in (e.g.) TNA, E179/75/381, m. 7 of 1664.

1541-2 (C1047; C1050) (Table 2). Their property seems to have included 12 Milton Lane, three other houses (or probably their sites), and about 25 acres land (Table 3). All this was settled on William Stevens's eldest son and heir John, with remainder to his grandson William (II) ('the younger') (C1050).³

Because of this settlement, when John Stevens wished to provide for his widow, he acquired a second house and 3½ acres (C332), which he settled on Elizabeth just before his death in 1553 (C357); she then married Thomas Barnes and her property did not revert to his son, William Stevens 'the younger' till she died in 1597.

William increased his holding by two acres in 1554 and by 16 acres bought from William Stone in 1563, and his rent in 1590 incorporates these enlargements, rising again in 1599 by the 3s 9d now due for his mother's house. Following William (II)'s death (certainly after 1597, but probably soon after 1604),⁴ he was succeeded by his son, William (III). The latter died in 1625, having had at least ten children born from before 1604 (or earlier) to 1625; he named three grandchildren in his will. His wife Julian, probably from a second marriage, lived until 1644. How the property was inherited by Francis is uncertain, since his elder brother, Edward, and nephew Henry should have had precedence; both of them may have died, it devolving on Francis, or William (III) may have settled it on him, making other provision for Edward (who may well not have lived in Steventon). It might, alternatively have passed from William (II) to Juliane, who made Francis her executor and residuary legatee. Her will mentions only her daughters and the one son, Francis, suggesting that the elder son and his children may have died.

A potential uncertainty exists as to whether Elizabeth's dower house or John and William's main property was the one that descended to Francis Stevens. However, this can be resolved from the earlier history of the main house. It can be followed back (Table 3), acquired by Robert Rye (or Ryem) from Richard Hill in 1530 (C973, 985), and by the latter from his mother, Alice Baker, in 1525 (C914). Her husband, John, was the son of William Baker and inherited the house (and a separate parcel of land) after the death of his father William's widow Alice or Agnes (C1531).⁵ It would have been inherited by John, William's grandson, after his grandmother's death, but he died in 1493, presumably without heirs and surrendered his property to his wife outright (C1225). She must have then married Richard's father, John Hill (C879).

The key evidence for the location of the property comes from an admission of Richard Wayneman in 1475 (C1506) to a holding adjoining that of William Baker. Richard's property itself can be linked to Home Farm House, next to 12 Milton Lane (STE-L).

Table 2. Admissions to 12 Milton Lane and Elizabeth Stevyns dower house (italics), 1541-1664

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Adm</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Premis</i> | <i>WAM</i> |
|-------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1541 | C1047 | Wm Stevens | s. Rob Ryme | Divers lands – no copy | TNA, LR 3/1/4 |
| 1542 | C1050 | Wm Stevyns | s. Rob Ryme out of ct | 1 mess and appurts and 17½ a land with meadow of ½v land and pasture of 2 cows; 4 a land late Charres; 2 mess called Churcheyates late Charres; 1 mess called Herdes; 3 a land 2 cows, late Wm Ffedys, court [blank Hy VIII] | 7412, rot 35 |

³ William was so-called to distinguish him from his uncle (see STE-H)

⁴ He is recorded as Elizabeth's son in 1597 and presumably, but not certainly, was the William listed in the rental of 1599. Since he was born in 1538-9, he is unlikely to have lived much longer than this. William (III)'s succession presumably took place during one of the gaps in the sequence of surviving court rolls, which become frequent after 1599.

⁵ The 27 acres held by William Baker in 1477 went to his four other children, since John received at least ten acres (the number incompletely legible) in a separate transaction (C1532); this may well have been the 17½ acres of the later holding.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Adm</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Premis</i> | <i>WAM</i> |
|-------------|------------|--|--|---|----------------------------------|
| 1546 | C1092 | John Stevens son & h, rem to Wm Stevyns son of John | s. Wm Stevens out of ct | 1 mess; 17½ a with meadow of ½v pasture 2 cows; 4 acres late Charres; 2 mess called Churchettes and 1 mess called Herdes and 3 a land; 2 cows late Wm Ffeddes court [1543] | 7412, rot 41 |
| 1554 | C356 | Wm Stevyns aged 15 by Eliz his mother now w of Thos Barnes | d. John Stevyns who held for life with rem to son & h Wm Stevyns | By copy 1 mess and appurts 17 ½a land and meadow of ½ v of land and pasture for 2 cows, 4 a late Chares lying in Watisland and S field, 2 mess called Churchettes and 1 mess called Herdes, and 3 a land and appurts and pasture of 2 cows late Wm Ffeddes by court [1543] | 7416, rot 1; 7417, sewn, f 7v, 8 |
| 1549 | C332 | <i>John Ste[v]yns</i> | <i>s. John Sharpole, ex ct</i> | <i>All title in mess called Wythes or Wythers and 3½ ac 1 r and appurts</i> | 7414, outer m |
| 1554 | C356 | Wm Stevyns aged 15 by Eliz his mother now w of Thos Barnes | d. John Stevyns who held for life with rem to son & h Wm Stevyns | By copy 1 mess and appurts 17½ ac land and meadow of ½ v of land and pasture for 2 cows, 4 a late Chares lying in Watisland and S field, 2 mess called Churchettes and 1 mess called Herdes, and 3 a land and appurts and pasture of 2 cows late Wm Ffeddes as by copy 18 Oct 3[35 7417] Hen VIII | 7416, rot 1; 7417, sewn, f 7v, 8 |
| 1554 | C357 | <i>Elizabeth his wife now wife of Thos Barnes</i> | <i>s. deathbed John Stevyns</i> | <i>1 mess called Wyses or Wichers, 3½a land and 1 rod land. Rem to Wm Stevyns son of John & Eliz</i> | 7416, r 1; 7417, f 8 |
| 1554 | C358 | Wm Stevyns son & h [jun] | d. John Stevyns | 2 a whence 1 free | 7417, f 7d |
| 1563 | C435a | Wm Stevyns | s. Wm Stone | 16 a, 1 cowlease, ½a in Heighmead | 7418, rot 5d |
| 1590 | | <i>Eliz Barnes</i> | | <i>Property in rental, rent 3s 9d</i> | 7354 |
| 1590 | | Wm Stevens | | Property in rental, rent 25s 4d | 7354 |
| 1597 | C669 | <i>Wm Stevens, son /heir of John and Eliz Stevens</i> | <i>d. Eliz Barnes late wife of Barnes, prev of John Stevens,</i> | <i>Customary lands [held for life]</i> | 7419, rot 13 |
| 1599 | | Wm Stevens | | Property in rental, rent 29s 1d | 7355 |
| 1645-6 | | Francis Stevens | | Property in rental, rent 28s | 7360 |
| 1664 | 3 | Hopkins, Francis | s. Hen Smalbone | 20 Nov 1661. mess bet houses James Stone [hld 31b] & Ric. Hopkins [hld 32] | |

Table 3. Admissions relating to 12 Milton Lane, 1475-1540

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Adm</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Premis</i> | <i>WAM</i> |
|-------------|------------|--|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| 1477 | C1531 | Alice his w, [?mess?] rem to John Baker, | s. bef death Wm Baker | 1[?] mess and 27 a land noted [the land was to pass to Richard Thomas Robert & William, the other sons of William Baker] | 7410, rot 19d |
| 1477 | C1532 | John Baker his son | s. before death Wm Baker | x[...][at least 10] acres land and appurts | 7410, rot 19d |
| 1485 | C1119 | Alice his w with reversion to John Baker | d. John Baker | Divers lands and tenements held by copy | 7411, rot 2d |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Adm</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Premis</i> | <i>WAM</i> |
|-------------|------------|------------------------|--|--|--------------|
| 1493 | C1225 | Alice w of John Baker | s. before death John Baker son of Wm Baker | By ct Tues eve of St Geo 17 Edw IV, 17 ½ a with meadow of ½ v and pasture of 2 cows, and reversion of 1 mess immediately after dec of Agnes late wife of sd Wm (Baker) now wife of John Days of Drayton Wyke | 7411, rot 13 |
| 1525 | C914 | Ric Hyll son & h | d. Alice Baker | 1 mess; 17 a and pasture 2 cows, surr by John Baker her late husb as ct 9 Hen 7 | 7412, r 18d |
| 1530 | C973 | Rob Rye | s. Ric Hyll | 1 mess and appurts, 17 ½ a with meadow of ½ v and pasture 2 cows, as ct 17 Hen [?8], 4 a land late Cyarres [details], year 4 Hen [?8], 2 mess one at Churchgatys late Chayrrys, 1 mess called Herdys, as year 14[?] of k afsd. 3 a land with meadow & pasture of 1 v of land late Wm Ffeddys as by roll yr 4 | 7412, rot 24 |
| 1531 | C985 | Rob Ryem [Rye earlier] | [Ric Hyll] | 4 mess 24 a land and meadow & pasture of 2 cows | 7412, rot 26 |

Abuttal of William Baker's house on Waynemans (STE-L)

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Adm</i> | <i>To</i> | <i>From</i> | <i>Premis</i> | <i>WAM</i> |
|-------------|------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 1475 | C1506 | <i>Ric Wayneman aged 12 s & h; guardian John Devenshire, clothmaker of Abendon</i> | <i>d. Hen Wayneman Oct 13 Ed IV</i> | <i>1 m 1v late Thos Ffelmonger and the sd mess lies next mess of Wm Baker and virgate lies in divers parts in field</i> | 7410, rot 17 |

Probate Records

12 Milton Lane was probably occupied by Richard White (d. 1717), whose will (proved 1718) has survived, but without an inventory. In the first half of the seventeenth century, William and Juliane Stevens (died 1625 and 1644) probably both lived there.⁶ Their inventories clearly relate to the same house, but it is larger than the sixteenth-century core of 12 Milton Lane; perhaps extensions had been added comprising the wings shown in TM 130, which have since been demolished or reconstructed.

William Stevens, 1625: inventory rooms listed:

Hall, Best chamber, Litle chamber, Upper chamber; Another chamber; Another chamber (second), Kitchen, Buttery, Malthouse.

Juliane Stevens, 1644: room names:

Halle, Chamber, [Litle chamber by the hale, *deleted*], Chamber over the hale, Another chamber, Chese lofte, Buttery, Little house by the hale, Kitchine, Chamber over the Kitchinge, Milk house, Vate house [*brewhouse*].

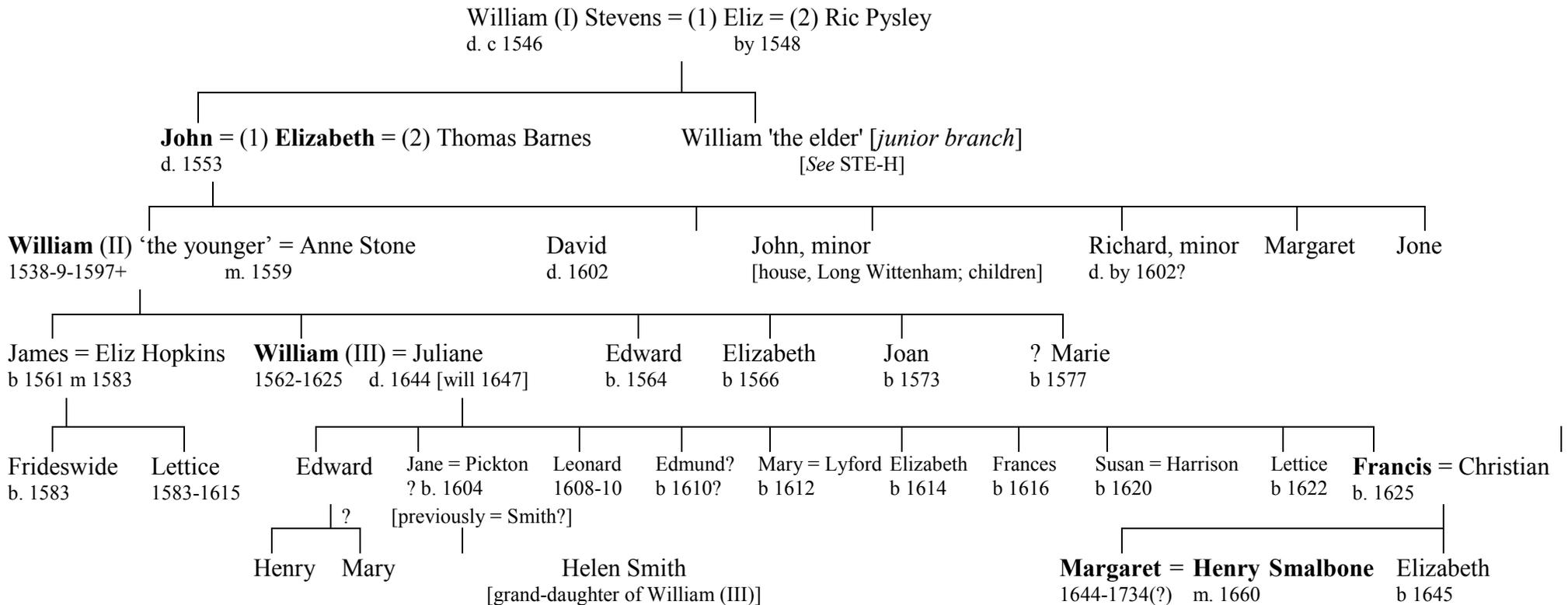
John Stevens, 1553: his inventory presumably also relates to this house. It lists: Chamber, hall, kitchen, brewhouse, and stable.⁷

⁶ BRO, D/A1/118;/120.

⁷ BRO, D/A1/114.

Table 4. Family tree of the senior branch of the Stevens family, descended from William Stevens (d. c. 1546).

For the junior branch, see the tree in the history of Box Hedge Farm, Steventon (STE-H).



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