

Untangling the Austens

*An attempt at untangling the Austens
of
Yalding, Goudhurst, Horsmonden and Wadhurst*

Pam Griffiths

Updated June 2018

An attempt at untangling the Austens of Yalding, Goudhurst and Horsmonden

A number of works on Jane Austen trace her family back to John Austen of Horsmonden (died 1620). Several attempts have been made to take this line further back, most notably by Sir Anthony Wagner. His conclusions were outlined in 1940 in a small book entitled *Pedigree of Austen, of Horsmonden, Broadford, Grovehurst, Kippington, Capel Manor, etc.*¹ by Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, with an explanation of his reasoning which is quoted below. In this document, John Austen's father is posited as the Robert Austen who was buried in Horsmonden in 1603. This has never quite hung together to me, for reasons outlined below, and the fact that the baptism of an unnamed baby cannot be taken as proof.

Quite by chance, I unearthed a will which, I am convinced, proves definitively that John Austen of Horsmonden (John I) was not the son of Robert but of Thomas Austen of Goudhurst and his wife Margaret, who baptized a number of their children in that parish, but clearly married and began their family before the commencement of the Goudhurst register in 1558. Before I explain my reasoning, though, it is worth quoting Wagner's arguments from Austen-Leigh's book:

"Jane Austen's ancestry has not hitherto been proved beyond her great-great-great-great-grandfather (Berry's *Kentish Genealogies*, 1830 p 127), John Austen of Horsmonden, who was buried there 5 March 1620. A brass shield of Arms, *Three roundels on a chevron between three lions' gambes erased*, remains on the tomb of his wife Joan, buried there 16 Dec, 1604 (Hasted *History of Kent* 1782, vol II p. 387). This coat, with tinctures as above, was allowed at the 1574 Visitation of Kent to James Astyn of Chevening, and Stephen Astyn (or Austen) of Yalding, the next parish to Horsmonden. Austen is a common name in Kent and similar Arms are recorded for three families of the name. The use of this particular Coat by John, so near in place and time to the Visitation family, decidedly suggests relationship. Such other evidence as I have found tends to confirm this. John Awsten of Horsmonden, in a deposition made at Canterbury (*Register of Depositions*, vol 14, p.80) made in 1591/2 states that he was then aged 32 and was born at Goudhurst. The Horsmonden register shows no John Austen other than Jane's ancestor to whom this deposition could belong. The Goudhurst Register shows only one entry that will fit John's date of birth as stated above – the baptism, namely, of an unnamed son of Robert Austen 26 April 1560. A consecutive series of his children's baptisms shows that this Robert was of Horsmonden, where he was buried in 1603, and that among them was a son Stephen, baptised at Goudhurst in 1561. Now the Visitation pedigree shows that Stephen Austen of Yalding had a son Robert by his second marriage to Dorothy Peckham, and I conjecture that this Robert is identical with the father of John of Horsmonden. The dates fit, for Margaret, Stephen's first wife, was living in 1522 when his father, William Astyn of Yalding, made his will P.C.C. 25 Maynwairyng), and his second marriage to Dorothy Peckham must have taken place not long after, for by 1574 James of

¹ BL - X.808/2018

Chevening, a son of this marriage, was himself married and had issue. The occurrence of Stephen as the name of Robert's son supports the identification."

Wagner's language is guarded; he uses words like 'conjecture', 'suggests', 'tends to confirm' but this proposed line of descent now appears regularly without any caveats. However, Heralds' Visitations were not foolproof, and it is likely that much money changed hands as the upwardly mobile jockeyed for the cachet of a coat of arms. Leigh-Austen's account makes much of the appearance of the names Stephen and Benjamin in the Horsmonden family, but Stephen Austen in particular seems to be a common name, and both this name and Benjamin feature in a family other than Robert's. While Wagner was undoubtedly the foremost genealogist of his day, seventy years later the internet has made finding original source documents considerably easier, allowing amateurs like me to find documents which probably eluded him. Four years ago, I synthesised every scrap of evidence I could lay hands on, and although I was not able to reach a definitive conclusion, enough anomalies were then unearthed to raise doubts about parts of the evidence for the Yalding connection. In the light of my recent discovery, I now have to rewrite a large part of my account, though I am leaving in much that I discovered about Austen families who may or may not have been connected, albeit tenuously to John I Austen.

A Canterbury Court Deposition² dated 16 Nov 1591 states:

John Austen of the parish of Horsmonden in the diocese of Rochester where he has lived for seven years, before that in the parish of Goudhurst for all of his life, aged 32.

As John and his wife Joan Berry's first child was baptized at Horsmonden in 1585, this would dovetail nicely with a move from Goudhurst to Horsmonden at the time of his marriage (at Lydd) in 1584. When trying to fit a baptism in 1560 with the age given in the deposition, I argued he had counted his 32nd year, rather than his age. However, an actual age of 32 would mean a birth in 1558 - 9. The Goudhurst register doesn't start until late in 1558, which could explain the lack of a baptismal record for John. It was only in 1597 that Elizabeth I ruled that parish registers should be kept in parchment books and it was at that date that earlier entries on paper were copied up into the volumes we have now. As Terrick Fitzhugh³ succinctly points out:

² CCA DCb/PRC/39/14

³ *Dictionary of Genealogy*, Terrick V H Fitzhugh, Alpha Books, 1986, Sherbourne

In the transcription, errors naturally crept in.

Only the will proves John I's parentage by naming key people from the Cantebury deposition. This deals with a visit made by John Austen and Soloman Were to Linton (just south of Maidstone and next door to Loose) to the house of Thomas Nixson senior, who was on his deathbed. The purpose was to persuade him to make a deed of gift to his son, Thomas Nixson junior, who was about to make a marriage 'deal' with a sister of John. A transcript of this document accompanies this article, along with the will.

It does not help that although the will in question is correctly indexed on the National Archives catalogue for the year 1602, it appears on *Ancestry* as that of Thomas Ansten of Wadhurst. However, on reading the text two bequests leap out:

Item I will and bequeath unto Salomon Weare the son of Thomas Weare and Elizabeth my daughter late deceased the sum of £10

and

Item I will and bequeath to Thomas Nixson the son of my daughter Elizabeth late deceased the sum of 10 shillings.

There is no way the conjunction of the names Soloman Weare, Thomas Nixson and John Austen, who also appears in the will, could be a coincidence. The text makes it clear that Thomas Austen's daughter Elizabeth had firstly married Thomas Weare, and borne two children - Soloman and Margaret - been widowed, then married Thomas Nixson and borne him a son of the same name. It looked as if, in 1591, John Austen I had taken his young nephew Soloman (or possibly a paternal uncle with the same name) on a visit to the elder Thomas Nixson to ensure that when his sister remarried she would be well provided for. As this wasn't conclusive enough, Thomas Austen's surviving children were named in the will as Thomas, John, Richard, Robert, Francis and Benjamin. John I named six of his sons John, Benjamin, Robert, Francis, Thomas and Richard. There were also Jeffery - named for his father-in-law - and Peter; otherwise the names are identical, with his father and all his uncles remembered.

This places another generation onto John I's tree with certainty. So the line now reads as follows:

The Descendants of Thomas and ?Margaret Austen of Goudhurst and Wadhurst

1. **Thomas Austen** Parentage unknown, but names a nephew Stephen son of brother Stephen in his will⁴, dated 24.8.1601. Married Margaret - surname unknown, or possibly an earlier wife - around 1553, which suggests a birthdate between 1520 and 1530. Several children baptised at Goudhurst after the register begins in 1558. One child buried there. Two mentioned in will whose births presumably pre-date the register. Signs Goudhurst register as churchwarden along with Laurence Shavel (?Sharpe) yearly from 1559-63, then 1565 and 67. Thereafter, biennially from 1570-6, 1577, and regularly every two years from 1580-1598. (Next churchwardens' signatures -Mathewe Road and Mathewe Browne - occur in 1601.) This suggests either a very late move to Wadhurst, or continuing activity in Goudhurst after the move. Land tenure in the Weald often consisted of scattered small parcels of land in several parishes. Appears on a schedule of leases⁵ at Wadhurst with date 24.12.1597. May have served as Guardian⁶ for Goudhurst with Laurence Sharpe in 1600. Will refers to Thomas Austen of Wadhurst, yeoman, and requests burial at either Wadhurst or Goudhurst; bequests to his wife and eight children, as well as his daughter Elizabeth's three children. Many of his sons are married, as bequests left to the children of sons John, Richard and Robert, and the 'six' children of son Thomas. Leaves some sizeable cash bequests - e.g. £200 to daughter Marie, as well as smaller ones - e.g. £10 to son John. Mentions 'the mansion house of my son Robert' where items of value are 'locked up', and leaves a number of houses and land in Wadhurst to his son Thomas - presumably the eldest - with the proviso that either the profits go to wife Margaret for life or he pay her a £20 annuity as set out in her jointure. Also mentions items of silver. Clearly a wealthy man. Will witnessed by the vicar of Goudhurst.

Possibly identifiable as the Thomas Austen of Goudhurst Clothier who purchased a house and land at Courtesden in Goudhurst in June 1584⁷. There is no reference to this land in his will, but it does seem to have been later owned by a Thomas Austen who was probably his eldest son (see below). The Goudhurst register shows no one else who could have been referred to (as this man is) as Thomas Austen senior, unless it was his son, who also had a son Thomas. However, this third Thomas, would have been a child in 1584, or possibly not even born. See below for further information on Courtesden. Buried at Goudhurst 6.10.1601 as 'of the parish of Wadhurst, householder', i.e. head of household.

Children of Thomas Austen and Margaret:

⁴ TNA Prob 11/99

⁵ ESRO, KIR/3/11

⁶ CKS, Q/SR/1/m.7

⁷ ESRO, SAS-CO/1/57/882, 883, 884

I. **Thomas Austen** Presumed to be the eldest child by virtue of the fact that his birth seems to predate the register. Probably born around 1554 at Goudhurst. Father's will mentions 6 of Thomas' children alive in 1601. Overseer of father's will – paid 10/- for his pains. Bequeathed all father's property in Wadhurst, provided he pay mother profits from property or an annuity. Probably witnessed the assignment of a lease⁸ on Chingley Furnace Goudhurst along with brothers Francis and Robert in 1597. If his father (or just possibly he) was the man who bought Courtesden in 1584, then he was the Thomas Austen who made a will in 1605⁹ as Thomas Austen of Goudhurst, and who was a clothier. Will names seven children: Thomas, John, Jeffery, Joan, Margaret, Ann/Agnes and Alice. (Those living when Thomas of Wadhurst made his will are underlined.) Leaves all houses, lands and tenements in Wadhurst to sons John and Jeffery, and dwelling house in Goudhurst to son Thomas, who is also charged with paying £100 to each of the daughters at 21 years. Receipts of their legacies refer to him as 'late of Courtesden'. Died between 10.12.1605 and 25.4.1606. Is it possible that a marriage between Thomas Austen and Alice Beree at Lydd on 15.5.1585 is this Thomas, marrying the sister of his brother John's new wife, Joan Berry?

Children of Thomas Austen:

- 1) **Thomas Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Bequeathed house in Goudhurst (presumably Courtesden) by father. Paid out legacies to his sisters between 1619 and 23. Presumably struggled to maintain own inheritance: mortgage taken out on Courtesden in 1622¹⁰ and this was foreclosed in 1631¹¹. His financial difficulties may have caused some delays in paying his sisters' legacies. No baptism found.
- 2) **John Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Received property in Wadhurst under his father's will. No baptism found.
- 3) **Joan Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Receipt for legacy signed by husband John Bayley of Goudhurst, clothier, and refers to father as 'Thomas Austen...of Courtesden...clothier...deceased'. Receipt dated 1611, so born around 1590. No baptism found.
- 4) **?Richard Austen** Baptised as son of Thomas at Goudhurst in 1594. Buried there 1595, so not one of the 'six' children of Thomas mentioned Thomas of Wadhurst's will.

⁸ ESRO, DYK/607

⁹ TNA, Prob 11/107

¹⁰ ESRO, SAC-CO/1/57/892

¹¹ ESRO, SAS-CO/1/57/906

- 5) **Margaret Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Married Nicholas Cleyton of Goudhurst, clothier. Receipt of legacy in 1619, so born by 1598. No baptism found.
- 6) **Ann/Agnes Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Married Nathaniel Foster of Cranbrook, mercer. Receipt dated 1621, so born by 1600. Probable baptism Goudhurst 1598.
- 7) **Alice Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Unmarried at the time of the receipt of legacy from her father in 1623; born around 1602. Probable baptism in June 1601 at Goudhurst, 2 months before Thomas Austen of Wadhurst made his will.
- 8) **Jeffery Austen** Willed 10/- by grandfather Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Named possibly after his presumed cousin of Horsmonden, or if Alice Berrie was his mother, after his maternal grandfather. Received property in Wadhurst under his father's will. Probable baptism at Goudhurst in 1603. It has been pointed out to me by another Austen researcher that the Elizabeth Austen, widow of Jeffery who wrote a will¹² could equally, or even more likely, have been the wife of Jeffery son of Thomas rather than his cousin Jeffery son of John (see p. 9), and that although she left bequests to Apesley relatives, this was not necessarily her maiden name. It would make more sense for this Jeffery to have fathered children John and Mary, both probably born in the 1620s.

II. **Jane Austen** Born around 1556 at Goudhurst. Buried at Goudhurst as 'Janne daughter of Thomas' on 28th August 1560.

III. **John Austen I** Born around 1558/9 at Goudhurst, as sworn in deposition regarding Soloman Were and Thomas Nixson, but before the register was established. This would make him 32 or 33 in 1591. Lived from the age of around 26 in Horsmonden as sworn. Willed £10 by his father. His children – unnamed – given 10/- each. Six of them would have been alive at this time. In 1592, Thomas Hampden took out a bond¹³ for £500 with John Austen of Horsmonden, clothier. There is only one John Austen assessed on the Lay Subsidy¹⁴ at Horsmonden in 1597/8 (at £4 10/8 on his goods); it seems likely that this is John I. Another John Austen, clothier, makes a solitary appearance in Horsmonden in a will¹⁵ dated 1615, naming wife Margaret, son Thomas and daughters Jane and Margaret, so the bond and lay subsidy could refer to him but

¹² TNA Pob/11/178

¹³ CCA U101/II/B/13

¹⁴ TNA E179/127/515

¹⁵ TNA Prob/11/127

it seems unlikely. Although John I's children all appear in the Horsmonden register, there is no record of either Thomas' or Jane's baptisms in Horsmonden, though a Margaret daughter of John and Margaret was baptised there in 1614, suggesting only a short stay in the village. According to Michael Zell¹⁶, families were remarkably mobile in the Weald at this time, often only baptising a single child in a parish before moving elsewhere. This hypothesis is backed up by the fact that John (d. 1615) only makes reference in his will to property in Staplehurst.

Later documentation makes it clear that John's son Francis owned the house known as Broadford in Horsmonden, but the 1602 Quarter Sessions¹⁷ seem to place John there a generation earlier. "A core or bancke" lying near a common bridge called Brodford Bridge in Goudhurst is a nuisance because it is damaging "an Arch" of the bridge. John Austen of Horsmonden has allowed the bank to remain for a long time. John apparently rectified the damage. He is described as a yeoman, and recorded as paying a fine of 6d. Broadford Bridge is not marked on modern O.S. maps, but is described by Francis Austen of Capel Manor in a series of letters¹⁸ dated 1872, as being 300 yards away from Stone Bridge, on a smaller mill stream. There was apparently a fulling mill at Broadford¹⁹, whether at the time of John I or not is not known. Broadford Bridge shows on the 1876 O.S. map as even closer to Broadford manor house than is Stone Bridge. The almost inescapable conclusion is that John was living at Broadford in the early 1600s, though he may not have owned it outright. This property may be what is referred to in his will²⁰ as 'the lease that I have taken of certain lands from Sir Henry Whetnall knight deceased.' (However, given the apparent connection between this land and Grovehurst in John II's will²¹ - see below - it's more likely the comment referred to Grovehurst.) The River Teise, the river fed by the mill stream, serves as the boundary between Horsmonden and Goudhurst, which further strengthens the idea of this family having a foot in both parishes. John made another appearance in the Quarter Session records²², in 1600, when he was accused of having ploughed up a section of highway. John Austen I married Joan Berry on 14.9.1584 at Lydd. She is described on her monumental brass as

¹⁶ *Industry in the Countryside: Wealden Society in the 16th C*, Michael Zell, CUP, 1994, Cambridge

¹⁷ CKS Q/SR/3/m.11

¹⁸ CKS Q/C Su 3/18

¹⁹ <http://www.goudhurstlocalhistorysociety.org/cloth-trade/>

²⁰ TNA Prob/11/137

²¹ TNA Prob/11/213

²² CKS Q/SR/1/m.11

daughter of Jeffery Berry, 'sometime of the parish of Midley'. I suspect this is where Joan was baptised, but no records survive. There are members of the Berry family recorded at Lydd, but Joan's baptism does not appear in the parish register. Joan's memorial, recording her death in childbirth on 9.11.1604 aged 36, names her husband and children, all of whom survived infancy. John was buried on 5.3.1620 as John Austen senior. His will²³ divides his money between all his sons, but leaves the land – whether in Kent or Sussex - to his eldest son, John, with a proviso that his grandson John Perryn, son of his daughter Joan, receive an annuity of £5. One of the witnesses to the will is Audrey Perrin, step-mother to his son-in-law John Perryn.

Children of John Austen and Joan Berry:

- 1) **John Austen II** baptized 1.8.1585 at Horsmonden, died without issue, and was buried at Horsmonden on 30.9.1650. His will²⁴ names: brother Benjamin (deceased), and Benjamin's children - John (deceased), Mary, Benjamin, Jeffery, Joan, and William; brother Richard, and all Richard's children (not named); brother Peter and his children; sister Perryn's children John, Joan, Elizabeth, Mary, Susan and Alice; brother Robert deceased, and his children John, Jeffrey, Ann and Joan; brother Francis – his principle heir; brother Thomas; brother Jeffery (deceased) and his son John; Elizabeth Austen, widow of his uncle Benjamin, and their sons, Peter and Benjamin. Also mentions kinsman Daniel Brattle and friends John Horsmonden and John Stringer. A clause reserves 'timber trees growing upon the lease land which I hold from Thomas Whetenhall' for repairs on Grovehurst, so it may be this property that John I was referring to in his will.
- 2) **Jeffery Austen** baptized 19.3.1588 at Horsmonden, possibly buried 19.3.1636 at Horsmonden. May have married Elizabeth, whose will²⁵ named her deceased husband Jeffery Austen, her children John and Mary, and various Apesley relations including a sister, and who was buried 1.10.1638 at Horsmonden. (See also Jeffery Austen p. 7.) A number of the family died during this period: Jeffery and his wife, Benjamin, Peter; Robert wrote his will, although he didn't die until some years later. An outbreak of plague around this time may account for the high mortality rate.

²³ TNA Prob/11/137

²⁴ TNA Prob/11/213

²⁵ TNA Prob/11/178

1. **John Austen** baptized 1627 Horsmonden
2. **Mary Austen**
- 3) **Benjamin Austen** baptized 16.5.1591 Horsmonden, died 1637, clothier of Goudhurst. Possibly married Joan Stringer and had three children by her:

1. **Benjamin Austen** baptized 1613 Horsmonden; died 1619
Horsmonden

2. **John Austen** baptised 1615 Horsmonden

3. **John Austen** baptized 1617 Horsmonden

Possibly married Margery Chexfield 1617 Horsmonden. However, given the number of Austens around, these marriages may belong to a different Benjamin,

Married Suzanne Brattle (b. 1604), daughter of Richard Brattle.

Benjamin's will²⁶ names brother Francis as witness, wife Suzanne, father-in-law Richard Brattle, brother John Austen as executor, and children John, Mary, Joan, Benjamin, Jeffery and William, all minors. Refers to 'loving cousin' John Horsmonden, and loving brother George Besbech. Presumably the latter is a brother-in-law - maybe husband to a sister of Suzanne - but the term cousin for John Horsmonden is curious. This is a loose term and could be used for a range of relationships, some of them quite tenuous. In his will²⁷ dated 1635/6 John Horsmonden makes reference to his father-in-law William Austen, but John married Margaret Austen in 1595. If he and Benjamin were first cousins, this would make William John I's brother, but although there is a William son of Thomas baptized in 1561, he would have had to marry and father a family as a child to fit the facts. The will²⁸ of John Horsmonden's father-in-law, William Austen, dated 1616, shows him to have sired daughters: Elizabeth married Anthony Fowle; Margaret married John Horsmonden; Ann married John Taylor; Judith married John Reynolds; Mary married Thomas ?Hewkley. He does mention some male relatives, a brother Richard and his three sons: John William and Robert - but no Thomas or Stephen. If John Horsmonden and Benjamin Austen were related, they would have had to be second cousins at most (see below)

²⁶ TNA Prob/11/174

²⁷ CKS PRC32/52/109

²⁸ TNA Prob/11/118

Children of Benjamin Austen and Susanne Brattle:

1. **John Austen** unless this is the John born to Benjamin Austen and Joan Stringer in Horsmonden in 1617.
 2. **Mary Austen**
 3. **Joan Austen**
 4. **Benjamin Austen** baptized 1633 Goudhurst
 5. **Jeffery Austen** baptised 1635 Goudhurst
 6. **William Austen** baptised 1636 Goudhurst
- 4) **Robert Austen** baptized 27.10.1594 Horsmonden. His will²⁹, written in 1638 and proved in 1645, calls him a clothier of Brenchley, names wife Elizabeth - née Bulet, whom he married in June 1638. His first wife, married in 1627, was Susanna Kely - the will also makes reference to his brother Edward Keyley. Three children named. Presumably, a fourth child - Joan, named by her uncle John in his will - was born between the writing of the will in 1638 and its proving in 1645.

Children of Robert Austen:

1. **John Austen**
 2. **Jeffery Austen**
 3. **Ann Austen** baptized 1632 Brenchley
 4. **Joan Austen**
- 5) **Joane Austen** baptized 10.7.1597 Horsmonden. Married John Peryn before 1619. Her eldest son John Perryn was named in John I's will, and the rest of her surviving children are named in John II's will.

Children of John Peryn and Joan Austen:

1. **John Peryn** baptized 1619 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
 2. **Joan Peryn** baptized 1621 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
 3. **Elizabeth Peryn** baptized 1623 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
 4. **Mary Peryn** baptized 1625 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
 5. **Susan Peryn** baptized 1625 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
 6. **Richard Peryn** baptized 1633 Horsmonden. Died before 1650.
 7. **Alice Peryn** baptized 1636 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
- 6) **Francis Austen** According to Hasted³⁰ it was Francis who originally acquired the manors of Grovehurst, Hoathe, Smeeth and Capel during the reign of James I [1603-25]. Given that Francis was born in 1600, with

²⁹ TNA Prob/11/194

³⁰ <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/> *The History and Topographical Survey of Kent*

four older brothers, and the fact that John II speaks of timber on land leased from Henry Whetnall being reserved for use on Grovehurst, it seems unlikely that he bought these estates before he was 25, and that his brother John ignored the fact in his will. Maybe the estates were leased to the family in James' I's reign, and finally bought outright by Francis sometime after 1650. Francis and his wife Ellen baptized most of their children at Goudhurst.

Children of Francis and Ellen Austen:

1. **John Austen**
2. **Eleanor Austen** baptized 1631 Horsmonden
3. **Francis Austen** baptized 1633 Goudhurst
4. **Thomas Austen** baptized 1637 Goudhurst
5. **Ann Austen** baptized 1641 Goudhurst
6. **Francis Austen** baptized 1644 Goudhurst
7. **Elizabeth Austen** baptized 1645 Goudhurst
8. **Samuel Austen** baptized 1648 Goudhurst

Francis' will is brief. The only son named is John, his executor.

Daughters Eleanor and Mary are named, and several grandchildren.

- 7) **Peter Austen** baptized 3.10.1602 Horsmonden. He and his wife Elizabeth had three children. These were mentioned collectively (i.e. not named) in their uncle John II's will.

Children of Peter and Elizabeth Austen:

1. **Joane Austen** baptized 1633 Horsmonden
2. **Peter Austen** baptized 1635 Horsmonden
3. **Thomas Austen** baptized 1637 Horsmonden

These dates would fit nicely with what looks like a nuncupative will³¹ of 1638, spoken in the presence of John Austen and Elizabeth Austen in which Peter leaves everything to his wife to bring up the children. It is not clear whether the date - 5.5.1638 - is a date of death or the date of the will.

- 8) **Richard Austen** baptized 9.12.1604 Horsmonden. Married Ann Keyley at Rochester on 15th March 1638, with residence given as Horsmonden. Five children were baptized to Richard and Ann Austen in the 1630s and 40s, and were mentioned collectively in John II's will.

Children of Richard and Ann Austen:

1. **Elizabeth Austen** baptized 1638 Horsmonden

³¹ CKS DRb/PWR/22/300

2. **James Austen** baptized 1639 Horsmonden
 3. **Joane Austen** baptized 1641 Horsmonden
 4. **John Austen** baptized 1642 Horsmonden
 5. **Richard Austen** baptized 1646 Goudhurst
- 9) **Thomas Austen** baptized 9.12.1604 Horsmonden. Although John II names his brother Thomas in his will³², he makes no reference to any children. The only other set of nieces and nephews not named are Francis' children, but he was the principle heir, so would have been well provided for. Thomas receives an annuity, so John may have felt this was enough. It is possible therefore that the children listed below belong to another Thomas Austen, maybe the Courtesden family.
Possible children of Thomas Austen:
1. **John Austen** baptized 1636 Goudhurst
 2. **Thomas Austen** baptized 1638 Goudhurst
 3. **Mary Austen** baptized 1640 Goudhurst
 4. **John Austen** baptized 1641 Goudhurst

- IV. **Wylliam Austen** Baptised at Goudhurst on 21.9.1561. This baptism predates that of his brother Richard by only 5 months, which casts some doubt, especially as not mentioned in Thomas' will. Thomas Austen signed register as churchwarden, and would presumably have noted errors regarding his own children. Is this the sole child of another Thomas? A late baptism? Not mentioned in Thomas' will, so either died before 1601 or unconnected.
- V. **Richard Austen** Baptised at Goudhurst 9.2.1561. In father's will bequeathed all his father's 'household stuff and furniture for his working house' which is already in his possession. Children bequeathed 10/- apiece. Does the term working house suggest that he too was a clothier? Possibly identifiable with Richard Austen of Hawkhurst; will proved 1610 naming wife Margaret, sons Thomas, Richard and David and daughters Marie, Frances and Sarah. Another possibility is Richard Austen of Marden householder buried at Goudhurst 23.5.1611. No further trace found.
- VI. **Robert Austen** Baptised at Goudhurst 24.3.1561. Described in father's will as having a 'mansion house'. Bequeathed the residue of his father's estate and appointed executor. Children bequeathed 10/- apiece. Probably witnessed the assignment of a lease³³ on Chingley Furnace Goudhurst along with brothers

³² TNA Prob/11/213

³³ ESRO, DYK/607

Thomas and Francis in 1597. Described as Robert Austen of Goudhurst clothier³⁴ in a Quarter Sessions Record of 1599 in which bound to keep the peace towards Joseph Willard of Horsmonden. Acted as surety to Benjamin Austen weaver of Horsmonden in the same case. Some confusion as there is also a Robert Austen broadweaver of Horsmonden, but it is unlikely that a broadweaver's house would be described as a 'mansion'.

VII. **Francis Austen** Baptised at Goudhurst 12.3.1569. Willed £100 and a third share of all linen and pewter 'locked up' at Robert's house and a third share of one dozen of silver spoons, one silver salt and one pot covered with silver. Probably witnessed the assignment of a lease³⁵ on Chingley Furnace Goudhurst along with brothers Thomas and Robert in 1597. No further trace found,

VIII. **Benjamin Austen** Baptised at Goudhurst 21.12.1572. Willed a third share of all linen and pewter 'locked up' at Robert's house and a third share of one dozen of silver spoons, one silver salt and one pot covered with silver. Potential for confusion with Benjamin Austen weaver of Horsmonden but this is almost certainly Benjamin son of Robert and Elizabeth, baptized at Horsmonden on 28.2.1572. Died before 1650. John II Austen willed Benjamin's widow Elizabeth £5 and their sons Peter and Benjamin £20.

Children of Benjamin and Elizabeth:

1. **Peter Austen**

2. **Benjamin Austen**

IX. **Marie Austen** Baptised at Goudhurst 21.8.1575. Willed £200 a third share of all linen and pewter 'locked up' at Robert's house and a third share of one dozen of silver spoons, one silver salt and one pot covered with silver. No further trace found.

Family of Thomas Aston of Goudhurst, clothier

Having established that John I Austen was the son of Thomas Austen of Wadhurst, who had a brother named Stephen, the next step was to look for the next link in the chain. Initially, this would suggest that the Yalding hypothesis could be correct, but before exploring that, it is worth looking at evidence from Goudhurst itself. There is, in fact, a will³⁶ which shows a clothier family group including siblings Thomas and Stephen.

1. **Thomas Asten** of Goudhurst, clothier. Will dated 16th June 1559; proved 2nd June 1560. Bequest of £10 to Richard Tatt (Tate?), tanner, and 3/ 4 to godson Thomas

³⁴ CKS, QM/SRc/1599/152

³⁵ ESRO, DYK/607

³⁶ TNA, Prob 11/43

Tate. Richard Tate made overseer.

Children of Thomas Asten:

- I. **Stephen Asten** Bequeathed £10.
- II. **Thomas Asten** Bequeathed 12d – the traditional sum to prevent someone challenging the will. Could this be Thomas Austen of Goudhurst, already set up in life? If this man was unrelated and had a son named Thomas, he could be the Thomas who bought Courtesden. If so, though, he must have baptised his family elsewhere.
- III. **William Asten** Bequeathed an annuity of 20/-
- IV. **George Asten** Bequeathed residue of estate, and lands and leases in Goudhurst, from which he is to pay debts and discharge legacies. Named executor.

The above seem relatively paltry bequests for a clothier, but maybe he had already passed on much of his wealth. Land values rose considerably in Kent between 1550 and 1600. Maybe Thomas of Wadhurst benefitted from this. This will tantalises; the dates, the names and the occupations match up, but there is not enough evidence to prove things either way. According to Zell³⁷, Goudhurst had 900 'parishioners' in 1557 and only 750 in 1569. From 'all sources' he identifies 14 clothiers in Goudhurst in the 1550s - 70s and only 8 in the 1580s - 90s. Common as the name Austen was in the area, it does seem unlikely that there were two, entirely separate, Austen families in Goudhurst engaged in the same occupation. If the William Austen cited above is the one who was a clothier and whose daughter Margaret married a Horsmonden, making her father the grandfather of John Horsmonden, that would make John I's son Benjamin second cousin to Margaret's son John and explain his reference to his 'loving cousin' John Horsmonden. However, William father of Margaret Horsmonden could equally be the son of John Austen d 1547!

The Astyns of Yalding

The next part of this account covers the Austen family in Yalding in the early 15th century. This is the family which Anthony Wagner thought it most likely that John I sprang from, and the fact that John I has now been proven to have a father named Thomas and an uncle named Stephen probably strengthens the case as the Stephen Astyn who was allowed:

This coat, with tinctures as above, ... at the 1574 Visitation of Kent

³⁷ *Industry in the Countryside: Wealden Society in the 16th C*, Michael Zell, CUP, 1994, Cambridge

had, as will be demonstrated, sons named both Stephen and Thomas.

1. **William Astyn of Yalding** Probably born around 1460. May have married twice. A plea of covenant³⁸ dated 1484 names William Astyn, wife Joan and land in Yalding. William's will, proved in 1522³⁹, places emphasis on the rights of youngest son John, a minor, and his mother, his current wife Elizabeth, whereas his older sons are clearly mature. The will gives the following: Body to be buried before the high cross in the church at Yalding. Pious offerings to churches at Brechessle [Brenchley], Benenden and Yalding. A tabernacle to be made to the image of St. Peter at Yalding according to a bargain made with Thomas Thorngate of Gouthurst [Goudhurst]. Land in Yalding, Loose, Sandhurst and Benenden, as well as land in Boxley which had belonged to his wife Elizabeth. Will names her; brothers John and Thomas Astyn; son Stephen and wife Margaret, sons Nicholas and John, daughter Agnes with husband John Wyllarde; grandsons, both named William, sons of Stephen and Nicholas respectively. Land in Boxley to go to John but to revert to Elizabeth if he dies before 21. The 1574 Visitation of Kent⁴⁰ names him; his son Stephen with an unnamed wife (presumably Margaret), second wife Dorothy Peckham and children from both marriages [See below under 4)]:

- I. **Agnes Astyn** married John Wyllarde before 1522, more likely around 1500-10. Both named in William Astyn's will. Brother Nicholas' will of 1532 names her, her husband and children: John, Richard, Elizabeth, Clement, Julian, Anne, Margaret, William, George and Dorothy; and some grandchildren. No further record found.
- II. **John Astyn** Willed land in Yalding, Loose, Sandhurst and Benenden by his father. Sold land in Benenden and Sandhurst to brother Nicholas before 1532. A will was proved at Rochester⁴¹ for a John Austen of Yalding in 1533. Wife Elizabeth named, son Laurence and brother-in-law William ?Whichman. However, no reference to the rest of this Austen clan, and Laurence doesn't appear as a name anywhere else in the Yalding family. Different branch? No further record found.
- III. **Nicholas Astyn** Described as of East Farleigh (a small parish between Yalding and Loose) in will⁴² proved 1532. Names deceased wives Joan and Alice; children William, Nicholas, John, Joan (wife of Guy Maylinn), Margery and Margaret; brother Stephen and Stephen's sons Thomas, William, John and

³⁸ TNA - CP 25/1/117/341, number 291

³⁹ TNA - Prob 11/20

⁴⁰ IHGS - *The Visitations of Kent, Taken in the Years 1530-1 and 1574*, Harlean Society, London, 1923

⁴¹ CKS - DRB/PWR /9/81

⁴² TNA - Prob/11/24

Stephen. His cousin Thomas Austyn (not son as I previously stated), and a godson Nicholas, son of this cousin are also named. (In my previous account, I wrongly assumed Nicholas junior to have been the older, testator Nicholas' nephew Thomas' son, which would have necessitated Thomas' birth a generation earlier, around 1510.) Nicholas' brother Stephen and his cousin Thomas Astyn executors. Abodes not given. Pious offerings to churches at East Farleigh, Loose, Linton, Marden, Halton, Yalding. Lands bequeathed in all of the above except Marden, and also Leigh and Sandhurst. Reference to acquiring land in East Farleigh and Linton from William Prebell, father of wife Alice. References also to broad yards of cloth brought from London by brother John, suggesting a possible link to the cloth trade.

- 1) **William Austen** Mentioned in wills of father and grandfather. No further record found.
- 2) **Nicholas Austyne** Will proved in 1564 places him at Loose⁴³; names wife Agnes and the following children, all minors;
 - i. **John Austen**
 - ii. **Thomas Austen**
 - iii. **Nicholas Austen**
 - iv. **Stephen Austen.**Requires cousin Stephen Austen of Loose - not Goudhurst - to be his overseer. No further record found.
- 3) **John Austen** Mentioned in father's will. No further record found
- 4) **Joan Austen** Mentioned in father's will along with husband Guy Maylynn and son John. No further record.
- 5) **Margery Austen** Mentioned in father's will. No further record.
- 6) **Margaret Austen** Mentioned in father's will. No further record.

IV. **Stephen Astyn** of Yalding. Named in wills of father (which leaves him land in Yalding) and brother Nicholas. No reference to abode other than Yalding. Wife Margaret named in William Astyn's will of 1522 and children William, John, Stephen and Thomas named in Nicholas' will of 1532. Appears on the 1574 Visitation of Kent as Stephen Astyn of Yalding, father of James Astyne of Chevening - the grantee - and son of William Astyn of Yalding. Wife named in this document as Dorothy Peckham, and children from this marriage listed as James, Robert, John, Margaret, Mary, Susan and Anne. No dates or places, apart from Chevening and Yalding, and no reference to children by wife Margaret, as attested by other family wills. No extant will, but a number of

⁴³ CKS - PRC 32/30/260

records place him in Yalding, namely: a pleading in the Court of Requests⁴⁴ which, while undated, is placed between 1492 and 1547 by the chancellor's name at the top of the document, and mentions only Yalding; two chancery proceedings⁴⁵, one - dated 1538-44 - also deals with a dispute over land in Yalding; and another -dated 1544-51 - in which Stephen is accused of conveying a house in Yalding belonging to someone else. A chancery pleading⁴⁶ dated 1570 shows Ann Austen née Gate, widow of William Austen - late of Farley and son of Stephen Austen deceased - contending her right to land in Yalding, which Stephen had been seised of about 26 years before. This land had passed to William, and an annuity on it was granted to Anne for life at marriage. During the same period, another chancery document⁴⁷ dated between 1533-8 shows a Stephen Austen (feoffee to uses of two messuages and 127 acres of land in Marden and Horsmonden) in dispute with John Roberts of Brenchley. A Writ of Sicut⁴⁸ dated 1526, summoned a Stephen Austen of Goudhurst to be on a jury at Westminster. Nothing suggests these are references to Stephen of Yalding. More conclusively, the will of Dionise Austen dated 1536⁴⁹, identifies her as widow of a Stephen Austen of Goudhurst, It is presumably the will of a relatively young woman, as the only people mentioned are her father and her father-in-law William Austen. Clearly this can't be William of Yalding, as he had died fourteen years previously, so there are obviously at least two, maybe more, Stephen Austens being documented.

Children of Stephen Astyn of Yalding by Margaret:

- 1) **William Austen** Described in the 1570 chancery proceeding⁵⁰ as of Farley and son of Stephen Austen deceased. Mentioned in wills of grandfather William and Uncle Nicholas. Appears as Stephen's son on 1574 Visitation. Born before 1522; died around 1569. Married Anne Gate. No known children. No further record.
- 2) **Thomas Austen** Not mentioned in grandfather's will, so presumably born after 1522, but named in Uncle Nicholas' will in 1532. Appears on 1574 Visitation. No further proven record. Could this be the Thomas Austen father of John I who made his will at Wadhurst naming a brother Stephen with a son Stephen?

⁴⁴ TNA - REQ 2/9/126

⁴⁵ TNA - C1/1061/48 & C 1/1132/33

⁴⁶ TNA - C3/80/43

⁴⁷ TNA - C 1/884/40

⁴⁸ ESRO - DYK/1076

⁴⁹ CKS - PRC/17/21/120

⁵⁰ TNA - C/3/80/43

- 3) **John Austen** Not mentioned in grandfather's will, so presumably born after 1522, but named in Uncle Nicholas' will in 1532. Appears on 1574 Visitation. No further record.
- 4) **Stephen Austen** Mentioned in Uncle Nicholas' will in 1532. Appears on 1574 Visitation. This Stephen is the most likely candidate to be the one named by Hasted⁵¹ : 'In the 33d year of King Henry VIII [c1542] the lessee of this manor [Loose] was Stephen Astyn, who was succeeded in the 30th year of Queen Elizabeth [c1588] by John Smythe'. His cousin Nicholas Austyn of Loose names him as overseer, and implies that he too is living at Loose. Given that this will⁵² places Stephen in Loose in 1564, it seems increasingly unlikely that this is the Stephen married to Joan Holmud in Goudhurst in 1560 and baptizing children there throughout the 1560s as Wagner suggests. To cite Wagner and Leigh-Austen again, the coat of arms was allowed to James Austen of Chevening and Stephen Astyn or Austen of Yalding, not Goudhurst, in 1574: Stephen Austen married to Joan Holmud must now be counted out of the equation. They married at Goudhurst in 1560, so it seems probable that all their children's baptisms were recorded. There is no sign of a son named Stephen who could be brother to Thomas Austen of Wadhurst. Children of Stephen Austen and Joan Holmud (married 1560):
- i. **Judith Austen** baptized Goudhurst 1561; died young
 - ii. **John Austen** baptized Goudhurst 1562.
 - iii. **Susan Austen** baptized Goudhurst 1564. Wagner has her married to William Walter at Goudhurst in 1590.
 - iv. **Judith Austen** baptized Goudhurst 1566. Wagner has her married at Goudhurst to John Reynolds in 1590. However, the will of William Austen⁵³ clothier of Goudhurst in 1616 leaves a bequest to a daughter Judith Reynolds, showing the Judith who married John Reynolds to have been his daughter. There is a marriage at Horsmonden in 1588 between a Judith Austen and William Perrine; I suspect this is Stephen's daughter.
 - v. **Patience Austen** baptized Goudhurst 1569. Possibly married John Garrette in 1594 at Horsmonden.

⁵¹ www.british-history.ac.uk *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 4* (1798) Hasted

⁵² CKS - PRC 32/30/260

⁵³ TNA - Prob/11/128

There is a second marriage for a Stephen Austen at Goudhurst to Joan Philpot in 1576, but no children recorded. To add to the confusion, a Stephen Austine baptizes a son George in 1560 and a daughter Ann in 1562 at Yalding, i.e. the very years that Wagner has Stephen Austen, son of Stephen of Yalding, baptizing Judith and John at Goudhurst. Maybe George and Ann are the children of the Stephen Austen who held the manor of Loose. Like the Goudhurst register, the Yalding one was in its infancy at this time, the first entries dating from 1559, so it is possible that George and Ann had older siblings, possibly one called Stephen!

Children of Stephen Astyn of Yalding and Dorothy Peckham:

- 1) **James Austyne** Entered pedigree at the Visitation of Kent 1574, naming father as Stephen of Yalding and grandfather as William Astyn of Yalding. Listed his mother as Dorothy daughter of James Peckham. Described himself as of Chevening and listed his siblings and half-siblings. Married Alice, daughter of Sir Henry Isley. Visitation notes arms as follows: Argent, on a chevron between three lions' gambes erased and erect sable, as many bezants, which is the same as the arms on the Austen tombs at Horsmonden. It is this which made Anthony Wagner infer that the Horsmonden family probably descended from that of Yalding. Chevening is some distance away from Yalding, and is not mentioned by any other documents to do with the Yalding family. This maybe suggests that Dorothy Peckham's family held land in the area, or perhaps James purchased lands here.
 - i. **Margaret Austen** Streatfield⁵⁴ has her married to Richard Brown esq. of Shingleton in Great Chart, but he has not proved a reliable source in many instances. No further record.
- 2) **Ann Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. No further record.
- 3) **Margaret Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation, but with a circle round her name and not connected by a line to the pedigree. No further record.
- 4) **Mary Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. No further record.
- 5) **Susan Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. No further record.
- 6) **Robert Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. Wagner conjectured that this Robert was father of John Austen I of Horsmonden, based mainly on the use of the same arms by both James and John, and the baptism of an unnamed child of Robert's in the Goudhurst register in 1560. He suggested that this man could be identified with the Robert Austen who died in Horsmonden in 1603.

⁵⁴ BL - Add. MS. 33,895 Streatfeild Collections. Vol. XVIII. Pedigrees of Kent

The Descendants of Robert and Elizabeth Austen of Goudhurst and Horsmonden

The family of Robert and Elizabeth Austen, long considered to be that of John I Austen, is included here for completeness. They clearly are not John I's family but there may be kinship links somewhere between the two although John I's family seems to mainly be wealthy clothiers while Robert's family, where occupations can be identified, seem to be humbler weavers.

There is a series of Quarter Session⁵⁵ documents beginning in 1599 detailing a quarrel between Austens and Willards in which the name Robert Austen comes up, but the Robert who died in 1603 seems a little old to be involved in assault, so I suspect the entries refer to his children baptised at Horsmonden, and another probable son also named Robert. The documents refer first to an assault in 1599, when Benjamin Austen of Horsmonden, weaver, was to appear and receive and keep the peace towards Joseph Willard. The row didn't go away, for in 1601 Robert Austen weaver of Horsmonden, and Judith and Joan Austen, spinsters - presumably his sisters - were to be brought before the Queen's Bench for perjury in that they swore at the 1600 assize that John Willard, clothier, attacked Elizabeth, the wife of Benjamin Austen at Goudhurst, when he was in fact at Marden⁵⁶. The 1601 entry cites John not Joseph Willard as the other party. Presumably, Judith and Joan were arrested for their perjury, which they would have been if they couldn't pay the £20 fine, because in 1602, Robert Austen weaver of Horsmonden was accused of assaulting John Browne and procuring the women's escape from him⁵⁷. As this Robert's wife is named as Margaret, not Elizabeth, it seems feasible that the man in question is a son of Robert and Elizabeth. Other possibilities present themselves: 1) clerical error - the QS entry should read Elizabeth for Margaret 2) Elizabeth is a very late second marriage, after Margaret's death, 3) Elizabeth's name is wrong in the burial register, 4) There are two, totally unrelated Robert Austens involved in this case, but this seems unlikely. 5) Most likely, - Robert the weaver is a son of Robert and Elizabeth, maybe the unnamed child baptized at Goudhurst in 1560.

- 1. Robert Austen** Baptised two children at Goudhurst and six were baptised or buried at Horsmonden. There is possibly one more son whose baptism has not been found. Wife Elizabeth was buried 24.7.1608 as 'widow of Robert' at Horsmonden. Robert was buried 27.5.1603 at Horsmonden. Other documentary evidence for Robert is confusing. Children of Robert and Elizabeth Austen:

⁵⁵ CKS QM/SRc/1599/151

⁵⁶ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

⁵⁷ CKS QM/SI/1602/32/9

- I. **Robert Austen** No baptism to corroborate this, unless this is the unnamed child baptized to Robert on 26.4.1560 at Goudhurst. Robert Austen, broad-weaver, and wife Margaret, appear in a series of Quarter Session Records in conjunction with Benjamin Austen and wife Elizabeth, and spinsters Judith and Joan Austen. So it seems like a family group. In 1599, enjoined, with Benjamin, to be of good behavior towards Abraham Willard⁵⁸. Appears again at the Maidstone Session in 1601 accused of false witness with Judith and Joan in a case of trespass and assault by the Willards on Benjamin and Elizabeth. A year later, indicted again⁵⁹ for assaulting the man sent to arrest Judith and Joan (presumably for false witness). Always referred to as weaver or broad-weaver.
- II. **Stephen Austen** baptized 26.1.1561 Goudhurst. Recorded as Stephen Austen son of Robert of Horsmonden. No further record.
- III. **Martha Austen** baptized 24.3.1565 Horsmonden. Possibly the mother of Prudence Austen, baptized 1599 at Horsmonden
- IV. **Judith Austen** baptized 20.3.1567 Horsmonden. Involved with her brothers in the Quarter Sessions cases; firstly in 1601 - falsely witnessed that John Willard had attacked Elizabeth Austen at Goudhurst when he was actually at Marden⁶⁰. Presumably arrested for this.
- V. **Elizabeth Austen** baptized 27.2.1569 Horsmonden
- VI. **Benjamin Austen** baptized 28.3.1572 Horsmonden. Appears in run of Quarter Session Records in a long feud with the Willard family of Horsmonden. In 1599 John Willard is instructed to keep the peace against him⁶¹ and 10 days later, Benjamin is instructed to keep the peace against him⁶². The trial is one of trespass and assault, and Benjamin's wife, Elizabeth, was the alleged victim; however, Benjamin is also accused of false witness⁶³.
The marriage of Benjamin Austen and Elizabeth Bishoppe took place at Horsmonden on 10.10.1596, and three children were born:
1. Salomon baptized 1597 Horsmonden
 2. Mary baptized 1599 Horsmonden
 3. Robert baptized 1600 Horsmonden
- Elizabeth Austen was buried in 1614 at Horsmonden, as the widow of Benjamin.

⁵⁸ CKS QM/SRc/1599/124 and 125

⁵⁹ CKS QM/SI/1602/32/9

⁶⁰ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

⁶¹ CKS QM/SRc/1599/123, 124 and 125

⁶² CKS QM/SRc/1599/152

⁶³ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

VII. **Salomen Austen** buried 19.3.1575 'son of Robert Austen'. No baptism found, but fits the gap between Benjamin and Joan neatly.

VII. **Joan Austen** baptized 1.11.1582 Horsmonden. Involved with her brothers in the dispute recorded in the Quarter Sessions; firstly in 1601 when she falsely witnessed that John Willard had attacked Elizabeth Austen at Goudhurst when he was actually at Marden⁶⁴. Presumably arrested for this.

Miscellaneous Goudhurst Austens

The registers show numerous other Austen families in Goudhurst in the earliest years recorded (between 1558 and the latter end of the century). All the following baptise often quite large families, full of familiar Christian names: William Austen of Burrs, Richard Austen and Elizabeth Kenworthy, John Austen and Alse Evernden, George Austen and Joan Besbeche, Richard Austen and Thomsin Rolfe, and of course Stephen Austen and Joan Holmud. None of these can be proved to link to John Austen I's family.

Wills also give tantalising glimpses of Austen branches at Goudhurst. Some have been abstracted and appear on the Kent Archaeological website at:

<http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/Research/Libr/Wills/Bk54/Contents.htm>

John Austen - 1547 mentions father William Austen, father-in-law John Stephen, wife Margaret, sons William and Richard, and three daughters. Streatfield⁶⁵ implies that the son William is the William Austen of Butts whose daughter married John Horsmonden, but he also states that John is the son of Stephen Astyn of Yalding and his wife Margaret, which must be wrong if the will is accurate in giving William as his father's name. Another John Austyne died in Goudhurst in the same year, admon⁶⁶ being granted to wife Joan.

William Awsten - 1551 annoyingly names daughters (Ellen, Joan and Elizabeth) but leaves his two sons (minors) unnamed. Names brothers Richard and Thomas. Described as a clothier.

Richard Austen - 1554 Occupation sythesmith. Wife Beatrice, son Thomas

Percival Austyn - 1556 Wills house in Courtesden to son Thomas, house in Staplehurst to James Awsten (another son?), two messuages in Bettriden to son William Awsten, land to daughter Margery Holmes. Witnesses: Wife Agnes Awsten, Richard Awsten and his wife, and others. The year before the will, Percival Austen 'of Staplehurst' took

⁶⁴ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

⁶⁵ BL - Add. MS, 33,895

⁶⁶ CKS - PRC3/11/101

out a bond⁶⁷ to Stephen Roberts of Goudhurst. Another bond⁶⁸ was taken out in 1587 by a William Austen clothier, who may belong to this family; three years later a fine⁶⁹ was levied, and in 1597 a covenant⁷⁰ presumably by the same William.

Others which I have abstracted appear on the wills page of my website at:

<http://www.genealogycrank.co.uk/willspage.php>

There was also a John Austen, mercer, who was living at Goudhurst at the time that John Austen I was living in Horsmonden. He appears in the quarter sessions⁷¹ in 1609 as victim of an assault. A reference to the same man in *Kinship and other Social- and Economic Links as a Basis for Personal Relationships in the Cranbrook Region of Kent 1660-1700*⁷² shows him to have had a son Clement, so clearly unconnected.

Courtesden, mentioned above, probably stood in what is now Curtisden Green, a small hamlet north-east of Goudhurst village. According to *British History Online* Curtisden was a property built by a Scot who built a mansion originally named Rookherst, later changed to Curtisden. This suggests that the name describes a single property rather than a cluster of homes. This adds to the intrigue, as Percival Austen, mentioned above, appears to will this property to his own son Thomas in 1556. Percival doesn't mention a son named Stephen, so the Thomas in question is unlikely to be father to Thomas of Wadhurst. The questions now multiply: did Thomas son of Percival sell the property after inheritance? Was Thomas of Wadhurst a relation trying to get the property back into the family? Is the whole Courtesden issue a red herring? I can answer none of these questions for sure, so have to simply be happy with adding the parents and siblings of John I of Horsmonden to my tree with confidence.

Key to abbreviations

BL	British Library
TNA	National Archives
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies (Now the Kent Library and History Centre)
CCA	Canterbury Cathedral Archives

⁶⁷ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/428

⁶⁸ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/886

⁶⁹ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/888

⁷⁰ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/490

⁷¹ CKS - QM/SIq/37

⁷² SoG - KE/L/162

IHGS Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies
ESRO East Sussex Record Office
SoG Society of Genealogists

Almost all baptisms, marriages and burials have been taken from original registers or transcripts at the Centre for Kentish Studies and the Society of Genealogists. A few have come from the *Tyler Index to Parish Registers on Ancestry*.

DCb/PRC/39/14 1591-1593 DEPOSITION REGISTERS vol 14, p.80.

John Awsten of Horsmonden.

John Austen of the parish of Horsmonden in the diocese of Rochester where he has lived for seven years, before that in the parish of Goudhurst for all of his life, aged 32 [rest of this Latin superscription is indecipherable]

[Main entry begins in Latin then switches to English. Some early words illegible]

... allegation.... from this deponent.... examined dixit that in May last past before his examination as he remembreth and on the day of the date of the deed as he remembreth at certam diem int tempus non..... and saith he this deponent went from the place where he dwelleth unto Linton to the house of Thomas Nixson lately deceased to see the sealing of certain writing concerning the assurance of certain goods and lands to Thomas Nixon son of the said Thomas deceased for that he was to deal in marriage with his the said deponent's sister and he saith that together with him this deponent went one Soloman Were his conteste [i.e.fellow witness] who coming to the said Nixsons house deceased found him in an upper chamber of his house and with him one Armyll Bodyam and his the said Thomas Nixsons wife and he saith that the said Thomas Nixon the elder the same time was very desirous to make deeds of gift both of his lands and goods unto Thomas Nixon his son the same ?producing? him for some concession? consideration He saith that the deed of gift being made was brought by Soloman Were his unto the said Thomas Nixon the elder as he was sitting on his bed and was by the said Soloman read unto him and when he had read it the said Thomas Nixon the elder liked well of the same and voluntarily and willingly subscribed his name to the same with his own hand as well as he could and sealed the same and then delivered it as his deed unto Thomas Nixon his son then and there present together with one pewter platter in name of the possession of his hoel [?whole] goods and this deponent and the aforementioned Amryll Bodyam and Soloman Were subscribed their names as witnesses to the same deal the ?promisses being done in the forenoon on the day about the time predeposed in the presence of this deponent and the parties aforementioned and he saith that the deed is the whereof he hath predeposed. He knoweth it for that he set his hand thereunto and remembreth the contents thereof....

John Austen

Next page is the deposition of Soloman Were. [Not transcribed word for word]

...that on the viiith day of May late past this deponent being ... went together with John Austen his presentes? unto the house of Thomas Nixson the elder deceased in Linton and coming there they found one Armyll Bodyam and some who they know not together with the said Thomas Nixon deceased in upper chamber of the house and the said John Austen coming unto the said Nixson had requested this deponent to make a deed of gift for the remortgaging and assuring of all his goods unto his son Thomas Nixson the younger whereupon this deponent wrote the deed of gift and then read the same unto the said Thomass Nixon the elder being on his bed in the presence of John Austen and Armyll Bodyam and the wife of the said Thomas Nixon deceased and others. The same being read to the said Thomas Nixon liked well thereof and subscribed his name ... and also sealed ... unto Thomas Nixon the younger... in the presence of this deponent and others before named.....

Soloman Were.

[At the bottom of this page in the margin is] Recog Cora 16 Nov 1591

Prob 11/99

Will of Thomas Austen of Wadhurst 1601

In the name of God amen the four and twentieth day of August anno domini 1601, and in the three and fortieth year of the reign of our sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God of England France and Ireland Queen defender of the faith etc. I Thomas Austen of Wadhurst in the County of Sussex Yeoman being sick in body but of good and perfect remembrance, thanks be to God, do ordain this my present testament conveying here my last will, in manner and form following videlicet, first and principally I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, my creator saviour and redeemer, believing steadfastly to be saved by the merits and blood shedding of our saviour Jesus Christ, and my body to the earth to be buried in the parish church of Wadhurst or Goudhurst aforesaid; Item I will and bequeath to the poor people of the parish of Wadhurst the sum of 40 shillings of current money, to be distributed at the day of my burial amongst them by the discretion of mine executor hereafter named, Item I will and bequeath to Margaret my wife all my movable household stuff and chattels lying and being in the parish of Wadhurst where I now dwell, except one dozen of silver spoons one silver salt and

one pot covered with silver, Item I will and bequeath to Marie Austen my daughter £200 of lawful English money to be paid unto her at two several payments videlicet £100 within one whole year after my decease, and the other hundred pounds within two years after my decease, by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto Francis Austen my son the sum of £100 of lawful English money to be paid unto him within one year after my decease by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto Richard Austen my son all the household stuff and furniture for his working house which he hath of mine in his possession, to be left to him as his own immediately after my decease, Item I will and bequeath unto John Austen my son, the sum of £10 of lawful English money, to be paid unto him within one whole year after my decease by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto Salomon Weare the son of Thomas Weare and Elizabeth my daughter late deceased the sum of £10 of lawful English money, to be paid unto him when he cometh to the age of one and twenty years by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto Margaret Weare the daughter of Thomas Weare and Elizabeth my daughter the sum of £10 of English money, to be paid unto her when she cometh to the age of 18 years by mine executor, And further my will is that if either of these two, Salomon or Margaret do die before they come to the years above-mentioned, that then the survivor shall have the other's portion as heir to the deceased, Item I will and bequeath unto the six children of my son Thomas Austen, 10 shillings apiece, to be paid unto them within one whole year after my decease, by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto the children of my son John Austen 10 shillings apiece, to be paid unto them within one year after my decease by mine executor, Item I bequeath unto the children of my son Richard Austen 10 shillings apiece, to be paid within one year after my decease, by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto the children of my son Robert Austen 10 shillings apiece, to be paid unto them within one year after my decease by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath to Thomas Nixson the son of my daughter Elizabeth late deceased to the sum of 10 shillings to be paid unto him within two years after my decease by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto Stephen Austen the son of my brother Stephen Austen late deceased the sum of five pounds of lawful English money to be paid unto him within one year after my decease by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath unto my three children Francis, Benjamin and Marye all such linen and pewter as are locked up within the mansion house of my son Robert Austen, whereof myself do keep the key, and all one dozen of silver spoons, one silver salt and one pot covered with silver, which are now in my own possession, to be equally divided amongst them promptly after my decease by mine executor, Item I will and bequeath to Sara Austen 10 shillings to be paid promptly after my decease by my executor. The residue of all my goods and chattels, my debts and legacies paid and my funeral expenses discharged I will and bequeath unto Robert Austen my son, whom I make my sole executor of this my last will and testament, and I appoint my son Thomas Austen overseer of this my present testament, and for the better fulfilling of the same, I will him for his pains 10 shillings to be paid by mine executor.

This is the last will and testament of me the above named Thomas Austen made and declared the day and year first above written concerning the disposition of all my messuages lands

tenements and hereditaments whatsoever situate lying and being in the parish of Wadhurst in the County of Sussex, first I bequeath to my son Thomas Austen all my messuages withal my lands tenements and their appurtenances lying and being in the parish of Wadhurst viz one messuage with the lands thereunto belonging which I lately purchased of Richard Harte containing by estimation eight acres, more or less, lying in the parish of Wadhurst adjoining to a certain wood called Week Wood, and also all my land which I lately purchased of Robert Crutall containing by estimation 18 acres of land being in the foresaid parish of Wadhurst, also one messuage or tenement which I lately purchased of William Barham, videlicet one house barn and a shop one garden and two acres of land, either more or less, to have and to hold the said messuages with their appurtenances to him and to his heirs for ever, also my will is that Margaret my wife, during the term of her natural life shall have the use and profits of all my said messuages lands tenements and hereditaments with their appurtenances lying and being in Wadhurst aforesaid, provided and ?alliances... and my will is, that she shall not strip nor waste fell cut nor carry away any wood growing upon the said premises, also whereas I have given and granted unto Margaret my wife by a deed, £20 to be paid unto her yearly after my decease and for her jointure, my will is that if she will stand to her jointure, then she shall have no profit of my said messuages lands aforementioned, nor any of my movable goods which before are specified in this my last will, then my will is that my son Thomas Austen shall have the profits of the said messuages and shall pay the £20 yearly according to the effect in true meaning of the aforesaid deed or jointure, which if he shall refuse to do, and that it be underpaid, then I will and my mind is that my son Robert Austen shall have the said lands to him and to his heirs for ever, and shall pay the said yearly annuity or rents granted by my aforesaid deed, as also all the said movable goods, the which I had given to Margaret my wife, and that I conclude and finish this my last will and testament by me Thomas Austen, witness hereunto Richard Carter vicar of Goudhurst Richard Austen

Probate granted to Robert Austen, son, 27.4.1602