

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:

“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 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’. However, this proposed line of descent now appears regularly without any caveats. 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. Below is the synthesis of every scrap of evidence I could lay hands on, and while I have not been able to reach a definitive

¹ BL - X.808/2018

conclusion, enough anomalies have been unearthed to raise doubts about parts of the evidence for the Yalding connection.

The first part of this account covers the Austen family in Yalding in the early 15th century; the second the family of John Austen I in the Goudhurst/Horsmonden area; the third notes random references to Austen families in Goudhurst, which stubbornly refuse to link together.

Yalding

1. **William Astyn of Yalding** Probably born around 1460 (a great-grandson was alive in 1532 and named in son Nicholas' will). May have married twice. A plea of covenant² dated 1484 names William Astyn, wife Joan and land in Yalding. William's will, proved in 1522³, 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 - one will be a grandfather within 10 years. 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 Goutherst [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 Kent⁴ names him; his son Stephen with an unnamed wife (presumably Margaret), second wife Dorothy Peckham and children from both marriages [See below under 4]):
 - 1) **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.
 - 2) **John Astyn** Willed land in Yalding, Loose, Sandhurst and Benenden by his father. Sold land in Benenden and Sandhurst to brother Nicholas before 1532.

² TNA - CP 25/1/117/341, number 291

³ TNA - Prob 11/20

⁴ IHGS - *The Visitations of Kent, Taken in the Years 1530-1 and 1574*, Harlean Society, London, 1923

A will was proved at Rochester⁵ 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.

- 3) **Nicholas Astyn** Described as of East Farleigh [a small parish between Yalding and Loose] in will⁶ 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 Stephen. A godson Nicholas, son of his nephew Thomas, is also named. This child, alive in 1532, would have been William Astyn of Yalding's great-grandson. Brother Stephen and his son Thomas to be executors; their abode 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, so possibly in the cloth trade.

I. **William Austen** Mentioned in wills of father and grandfather. No further record found.

II. **Nicholas Austyne** Will proved in 1564 places him at Loose⁷; 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.

III. **John Austen** Mentioned in father's will. No further record found

IV. **Joan Austen** Mentioned in father's will along with husband Guy Maylynn and son John. No further record.

V. **Margery Austen** Mentioned in father's will. No further record.

VI. **Margaret Austen** Mentioned in father's will. No further record.

- 4) **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.

⁵ CKS - DRB/PWR /9/81

⁶ TNA - Prob/11/24

⁷ CKS - PRC 32/30/260

Wife Margaret named in William Astyn's will of 1522 and children William, John, Stephen and Thomas named in Nicholas' will of 1532, along with grandson Nicholas, son of son Thomas. 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. No extant will, but a number of records place him in Yalding, namely: a pleading in the Court of Requests⁸ 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 proceedings⁹, 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 pleading¹⁰ 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 document¹¹ 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 Sicut¹² 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 1536¹³, 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:

⁸ TNA - REQ 2/9/126

⁹ TNA - C1/1061/48 & C 1/1132/33

¹⁰ TNA - C3/80/43

¹¹ TNA - C 1/884/40

¹² ESRO - DYK/1076

¹³ CKS - PRC/17/21/120

- I. **Thomas Austen** Named as executor of Uncle Nicholas' will in 1532 and as father of a child, Nicholas, so presumably born around 1510 or earlier. No further record.
 - i. **Nicholas Austen** Mentioned in Great-uncle Nicholas' will 1532. No further record.
- II. **William Austen** Described in the 1570 chancery proceeding¹⁴ 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.
- III. **John Austen** Mentioned in Uncle Nicholas' will in 1532. Appears on 1574 Visitation. No further record.
- IV. **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 Hasted¹⁵ : '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 will¹⁶ places Stephen in Loose in 1564, it seems unlikely that this is the Stephen married to Joan Holmud in Goudhurst in 1560 (if it was, then he married a whole generation later than his brother Thomas, who must have been married by at least 1531 to be the father of Nicholas mentioned in Nicholas Austen's will of 1532) and baptizing children there throughout the 1560s as Wagner suggests. Children of Stephen Austen and Joan Holmud:
 - 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 Austen¹⁷ clothier of Goudhurst in 1616 leaves a bequest to a daughter Judith Reynolds, showing the Judith who married John

¹⁴ TNA - C/3/80/43

¹⁵ www.british-history.ac.uk *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 4 (1798)* Hasted

¹⁶ CKS - PRC 32/30/260

¹⁷ TNA - Prob/11/128

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.

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. All the evidence uncovered points to the children of Stephen Astyn's marriage to Margaret remaining in the Yalding area.

Children of Stephen Astyn of Yalding and Dorothy Peckham:

I. **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** Streatfield¹⁸ 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. If Margaret died without issue and if Robert Austen of Horsmonden was James' brother, then John would have been his heir and therefore had the right to bear his arms - provided of course that there were no living male heirs from Stephen Astyn's family by Margaret.

II. **Ann Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. No further record.

¹⁸ BL - Add. MS. 33,895 Streatfeild Colletions. Vol. XVIII. Pedigrees of Kent

III. **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.

IV. **Mary Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. No further record.

V. **Susan Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. No further record.

VI. **Robert Austen** Appears on the 1574 Visitation. Wagner conjectures 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. However, Herald's 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 Benjamin only occurs amongst Robert Austen of Horsmonden's descendants. Given that his half-siblings were in Yalding, East Farleigh and Loose, and his brother in Chevening, it begs the question as to what brought Robert to Goudhurst – assuming it is the same man. Distant Austen kin, maybe, or marriage? With Stephen Austen (married Joan Holmud) excluded from the equation, the use of the same arms by his son is the only piece of evidence to tie the two families together.

Goudhurst and Horsmonden

- i. **Robert Austen** of Goudhurst and Horsmonden. May be the same as Robert Austen VI above, if the use by his descendents of the arms granted to James of Chevening was legitimate. 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. There is a series of Quarter Session documents in which this name comes up. In 1599 Robert Austen of Goudhurst, clothier, stands surety for Benjamin Austen broadweaver of Horsmonden to keep the peace towards Joseph Willard of Horsmonden, and is held in £10 to do so himself¹⁹. If this is Robert, father of John I, he was still connected with Goudhurst parish, and Benjamin is his son. The row didn't go away, for in 1601 Robert Austen weaver of Horsmonden, and Judith and Joan Austen, spinster – presumably his daughters – are to be brought before the Queen's Bench for perjury in that they swore at the 1600 assize that John Willard,

¹⁹ CKS QM/SRc/1599/151

clothier, attacked Elizabeth, the wife of Benjamin Austen at Goudhurst, when he was in fact at Marden²⁰. It refers back to an assault in 1599, presumably the one above, but 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 is accused of assaulting John Browne and procuring the women's escape from him²¹. Apart from the fact that one Robert is defined as clothier of Goudhurst, and the other broadweaver of Horsmonden, the main problem with this entry is that Robert's wife is named as Margaret, not Elizabeth. Five 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) Most likely, - Robert the weaver is a son of Robert the clothier, born perhaps before John, and maybe baptized at his mother's home parish. 5) There are two, totally unrelated Robert Austens involved in this case, but this seems unlikely.

I. **John Austen I** baptised at Goudhurst on 26.4.1560 as 'sonne of Robert Austen'. Several things tend to confirm that the child is John I: 1) His son John names an uncle Benjamin in his will and Benjamin was baptised as Robert's son in Horsmonden. 2) Robert's second son at Goudhurst is named as 'son of Robert of Horsmonden'; suggesting a foot in both parishes confirmed by the baptisms of the rest of the children at Horsmonden. 3) A Canterbury Court Deposition²² dated 16 Nov 1591 has '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' which would be accurate if he meant 32nd year. It would also suggest a move to Horsmonden at the time of his marriage in 1584. This equally seems to dovetail well with his father starting out in Goudhurst and ending up in Horsmonden. The deposition deals with a visit made by John Austen and Solomon Were to Pinton to the house of Thomas Nixson senior, who was on his deathbed. The purpose seems to have been 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. I have not been able to discover if this marriage took place. 4) His adoption of the arms of James of Chevening might also be seen as an indication that he was the son of the

²⁰ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

²¹ CKS QM/SI/1602/32/9

²² CCA DCb/PRC/39/14

Robert whom James named as his brother. The year after the deposition, 1592, Thomas Hampden took out a bond²³ with a John Austen of Horsmonden, clothier, for £500. A John Austen, clothier, makes a solitary appearance in Horsmonden in a will²⁴ dated 1615, naming son Thomas and daughter Margaret, so the bond may refer to him. There is no record of Thomas and Margaret's baptisms in Horsmonden, and there are mentions of Staplehurst in the will, which suggests a possible link to the family of Percival Austen of Goudhurst²⁵, who left Courtesden in Goudhurst to his son Thomas and Kingswoode in Staplehurst to his son James in a will of 1556 (see below). There is only one John Austen assessed on the Lay Subsidy²⁶ in 1597/8 - at £4 10/4 on his goods - and it seems likely that this is John I.

Later documentation makes it clear that John's son Francis owned the house known as Broadford in Horsmonden, but the 1602 Quarter Sessions²⁷ 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 letters²⁸ dated 1872, as being 300 yards away from Stone Bridge, on a smaller mill stream. This 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 will²⁹ 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 will³⁰ - see below - it's possible 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

²³ CCA U101/II/B/13

²⁴ TNA Prob/11/127

²⁵ TNA Prob/11 39 (Transcript in Kent Wills Online)

²⁶ TNA E179/127/515

²⁷ CKS Q/SR/3/m.11

²⁸ CKS Q/C Su 3/18

²⁹ TNA Prob/11/137

³⁰ TNA Prob/11/213

of this family having a foot in both parishes. John made another appearance in the Quarter Session records³¹, in 1600, when he was accused of having ploughed up a section of highway. As usual, there is the problem of multiple candidacy in trying to research John Austen, and some of the above documents may not relate to him. An Elizabeth Austen is baptized to a father John at Horsmonden in 1577 – too early for John I; she may belong to the family of John Austen and Alse Evernden, who married in Goudhurst in 1560 and raised a large family there, including a son John, baptized in 1564. Even more troubling is the burial of John Austen senior on 30.11.1587 at Horsmonden. Where does he fit in? Father of the John who died in 1615, maybe.

John Austen I married Joan Berry on 14.9.1584 at Lydd. She is described on her monumental brass as 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 will³² divides his money between all his sons, but leaves the land 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.

1) **John Austen II** baptized 1.8.1585 at Horsmonden, died without issue, and was buried at Horsmonden on 30.9.1650. His will³³ 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

³¹ CKS Q/SR/1/m.11

³² TNA Prob/11/137

³³ TNA Prob/11/213

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, buried 19.3.1636 at Horsmonden, married Elizabeth Apesley, whose will³⁴ named her deceased husband Jeffery, her children John and Mary, and various Apesley relations including a sister. She was buried 1.10.1638 at Horsmonden. 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.
 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 HorsmondenPossibly married Margery Chexfield 1617 Horsmonden. However, given the number of Austens around, this may be a different Benjamin, either his uncle or someone else entirely.

Married Suzanne Brattle, daughter of Richard Brattle. Benjamin's will³⁵ 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 Susanna - 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 will³⁶ dated 1635/6 John Horsmonden makes reference to his father-in-law William Austen. If he and Benjamin were first cousins, this would make William John I's brother, but no William has

³⁴ TNA Pob/11/178

³⁵ TNA Prob/11/174

³⁶ CKS PRC32/52/109

been recorded as a son of Robert. The will³⁷ of John Horsmonden's father-in-law, William Austen, dated 1616, shows him to have sired only daughters: Elizabeth, who married Anthony Fowle; Margaret, who 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 – born, unfortunately, too late to be Robert, father of John I, so the connection between the two families remains a mystery. His children by Susanne Brattle were:

1. **John Austen**
 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 will³⁸, written in 1638 and proved in 1645, calls him a clothier of Brenchley, names a wife Elizabeth - probably née Keyley, as the will also makes reference to his brother Edward Keyley. Three children are also named. Presumably, as a fourth child – Joan - is named by her uncle John in his will, she was born between the writing of the will in 1638 and its proving in 1645:
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 Peryn was named in John I's will, and the rest of her surviving children are named in John II's will:
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.

³⁷ TNA Prob/11/118

³⁸ TNA Prob/11/194

7. **Alice Peryn** baptized 1636 Horsmonden. Named in John II's will.
- 6) **Francis Austen** According to Hasted³⁹ 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 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:
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:
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 will⁴⁰ 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. In 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. Five children were baptized to a Richard and Ann Austen in the 1630s and 40s, and were mentioned collectively in John II's will:

³⁹ <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/> *The History and Topographical Survey of Kent*

⁴⁰ CKS DRb/PWR/22/300

1. **Elizabeth Austen** baptized 1638 Horsmonden
 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 will⁴¹, 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. However, it is possible that the children listed below belong to another 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
- II. **Stephen Austen** baptized 26.1.1561 Goudhurst. Recorded as Stephen Austen son of Robert of Horsmonden. No further record.
- III. **Robert Austen** No baptism to corroborate this. However, a Robert Austen, broad-weaver, and his wife Margaret, appear in a series of Quarter Session Records in conjunction with Benjamin Austen and his wife Elizabeth, and his spinster sisters, Judith and Joan. In 1599, he is enjoined, with Benjamin, to be of good behavior towards Abraham Willard⁴². Ten days later, Robert Austen of Goudhurst, clothier, is to keep the peace towards Joseph Willard, and acts as surety over the same issue for Benjamin⁴³. He appears again at the Maidstone Session in 1601 accused of false witness, along with Judith and Joan in a case of trespass and assault by the Willards on Benjamin and his wife Elizabeth. A year later, he is indicted again⁴⁴ for assaulting the man sent to arrest Judith and Joan (presumably for false witness). On this occasion, he is called a weaver. It is not clear whether Robert the weaver, broad-weaver and clothier are all the same man, but given the context, it seems likely.
- IV. **Martha Austen** baptized 24.3.1565 Horsmonden. Possibly the mother of Prudence Austen, baptized 1599 at Horsmonden

⁴¹ TNA Prob/11/213

⁴² CKS QM/SRc/1599/124 and 125

⁴³ CKS QM/SRc/1599/151 and 152

⁴⁴ CKS QM/SI/1602/32/9

- V. **Judith Austen** baptized 20.3.1567 Horsmonden. Involved with her brothers 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 Marden⁴⁵. Presumably arrested for this.
- VI. **Elizabeth Austen** baptized 27.2.1569 Horsmonden
- VII. **Benjamin Austen** baptized 28.3.1572 Horsmonden. Appears in a run of Quarter Session Records in what is clearly a long feud with the Willard family of Horsmonden. In 1599 John Willard is instructed to keep the peace against him⁴⁶ and 10 days later, Benjamin is instructed to keep the peace against him⁴⁷. The trial is one of trespass and assault, and Benjamin's wife, Elizabeth, was the alleged victim; however, Benjamin is also accused of false witness⁴⁸. Abstracts of these documents can be found on A2A at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/advanced-search.aspx?tab=1> 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. He died before 1650, but a second wife (presumably), his widow Elizabeth, is named in her brother-in-law John's will of 1650, and was the mother of two further children:
4. Peter, named as a beneficiary in his uncle John's will of 1650
 5. Benjamin, named as a beneficiary in his uncle John's will of 1650
- Once again, it is difficult to disentangle uncle and nephew, as they both seem to be in the marriage market at a similar time – unless, again, there is a third Benjamin.
- VIII. **Salomen Austen** buried 19.3.1575 'son of Robert Austen'. No baptism found, but fits the gap between Benjamin and Joan neatly.
- IX. **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

⁴⁵ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

⁴⁶ CKS QM/SRc/1599/123, 124 and 125

⁴⁷ CKS QM/SRc/1599/152

⁴⁸ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

Goudhurst when he was actually at Marden⁴⁹. Presumably arrested for this.

Goudhurst

The registers show numerous 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: Thomas Austen of Courtresden, William Austen of Burrs, Richard Austen and Elizabeth Kenworthy, John Austen and Else 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. Streatfield⁵⁰ 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, admon⁵¹ 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 out a bond⁵² to Stephen Roberts of Goudhurst. Another bond⁵³ was taken out in 1587 by

⁴⁹ CKS Q/SR/2/m.4d

⁵⁰ BL - Add. MS, 33,895

⁵¹ CKS - PRC3/11/101

⁵² ESRO - SAS-CO/1/428

⁵³ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/886

a William Austen clothier, who may belong to this family, three years later a fine⁵⁴ was levied, and in 1597 a covenant⁵⁵ presumably by the same William.

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 sessions⁵⁶ 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* 1660-170⁵⁷ shows him to have had a son Clement, so clearly unconnected.

Key to abbreviations

BL	British Library
TNA	National Archives
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
CCA	Canterbury Cathedral Archives
IHGS	Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies
ESRO	East Sussex Record Office
SoG	Society of Genealogists

All baptisms, marriages and burials have been taken from original registers or transcripts at the Centre for Kentish Studies and the Society of Genealogists.

⁵⁴ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/888

⁵⁵ ESRO - SAS-CO/1/490

⁵⁶ CKS - QM/SIq/37

⁵⁷ SoG - KE/L/162