

**MEDIEVAL GENEALOGY:
CASE STUDY 2: STEPHEN CRUDE**

Stephen Crudde, of Ickleton, Cambridgeshire, describes himself as a husbandman. A husbandman was a farmer, fairly low in the social scale, though not necessarily a poor man.

He asks to be buried in Ickleton churchyard: not for him a tomb in a prestigious part of the building. He leaves good money to Ickleton church, and several other local churches: Hinxton, Duxford, *Wittelisford*, Thriplow, *Cristishale*, Stapleford, Newport, Elmton, Great Chesterford and Littlebury, and also to Clare Hall, Cambridge, and the four orders of friars in the city.

He leaves horses and carts to his **wife Johane**, with reversion to his two sons; Johane also receives malt and sheep. His **sons Richard and John** receive malt, sheep, and silver spoons, as does his **daughter Rose**, but Rose also comes in for a wide range of household articles, most of his best bedding and his best gold ring. His **daughter Elinore** must be content with 20s.

What are we to make of a bequest to Rose of ‘a saffron garden ... which was hir moders’? Presumably that Rose was born to an earlier wife, and not to the living Johane.

After his comparatively short English testament, there comes a long Latin will concerning the disposal of his land, and we find he had messuages, lands, tenements, meadow, grazing and pasture land in **Ickleton** and **Newport**. These include a messuage called Brodeheys and a meadow called le Hethe in Newport, a messuage he bought from a John Glover, a messuage called Rokelis in Newport with a shop and meadowlands, an acre with a shop built on it, and a tenement in Ickleton bought from a Thomas Brown. His capital messuage was in Ickleton and there was a tenement attached called Ferautes.

His wife is to have property in Ickleton and Newport until Richard and John reach the age of 20 years, when they inherit their shares; she is to provide his children to school [*ad gignasium*] for three or four years. (Does this include the girls? Probably not. But the Latin word used is *liberos*, which is ambiguous here.) If one boy dies before he inherits, the other is to be his heir; if both boys die, the land does not go to the girls. It is to be sold. They are, however, left land for themselves: Rose is to have a messuage in Newport called Bedgoris immediately after his death, and his **daughter Johane** gets a messuage in **Hinxton** ‘which I bought from my **brother William**’ – there are complicated arrangements to be followed if William wants to buy it back, and it is clear that Johane is not yet 18.

It would appear from this that Rose is his eldest child, born of a previous wife; the other three are under age, and may be Johane’s children. Is his daughter Johane the same as his daughter Elinore? Probably: the very last bequest in the testament is of six silver spoons to Johane – he has realised that he left her out when giving silver spoons to the other three.

As to Crudde himself, he appears to have been

- (a) prosperous, as he bought up land
- (b) innovative, as he diversified into acquiring shops
- (c) upwardly mobile, as his sons at least received education in a school, and he left money to a Cambridge college

If his sons both died, and the land was sold, £20 of sale price was to be divided between:
my brother John Wilkins £5 (£2 for himself and £3 shared between his children)

my brother William Wilkins £5 ditto
John Bastard £5 ditto
my sister Johanne £5 ditto.

Why do his brothers have a different surname? In medieval terms they could be

- (a) half-brothers by a different father
- (b) husbands of his sisters (not so likely, as he lists his married sister Johanne, and it would mean that two brothers had married two sisters – not impossible, but unusual)
- (c) brothers of his wife – either of Johanne or a previous wife

Is John Bastard a bastard brother?

With the will as starting point, what other steps can be taken to trace the family of Stephen Crudde?

(a) look for any surviving manorial documents from the places he mentions, firstly Newport and Ickleton, but extending to all the parishes whose churches he left money to;

(b) search other medieval sources.

For example, an online search in the Catalogue of The National Archives in the class C 1 reveals three further mentions of the Crudde family in Cambridgeshire:

C 1/542/8 (1518-29) has a John Crudde who is a party to a case concerning detention of deeds to land and a message in Ickleton;

C 1/557/71 (1518-29) is a dispute between John Page and Johan his wife, widow of William Crudde, and Margaret Crudde, also concerning detention of deeds to land in Cambridge;

C 1/620/23 (1529-32) is a dispute between John Crudde junior, son of Richard Crudde, and John Crudde senior, son of the said Richard, concerning detention of deeds to land in Ickleton, some 'holden of the master and fellows of Clare Hall, Cambridge'.

So it is often possible to document even comparatively humble families in the fifteenth century, especially if you are lucky enough to find a will.