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THE WILL OF STEVEN HAWTHORNE

THE Baptist church at West End, Stevington, was formed in 1655. It worships in one of the oldest and best preserved of historic meeting-houses, its main features little changed since its erection in 1721. The first Church Book, which contains entries from 1673 to 1721, is now on deposit loan in the County Record Office, Bedford. The contents have been carefully transcribed by Mr. H. G. Tibbutt and are printed in *Some Early Nonconformist Church Books*, Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol. 51, 1972. Mr. Tibbutt provided the church with a brief history at the time of the tercentenary, *Stevington Baptist Meeting, 1655-1955*.

From 1655 until his death in 1694/5 the Stevington church was led by Steven Hawthorne, a yeoman whom the Church Book describes as "their beloved brother and teacher". Among the papers possessed by the church is a photostat copy of his will.

In 1691 Hawthorne's son - of the same name - and Daniel Negus were appointed Elders "with prayer and fasting and laying on of hands" by pastors from Eversholt and Tring. Edward Bull, of Pavenham, joined the church in July, 1674, was "chosen for a deacon" two months later and was more than once sent to visit members of the church living in distant places, some as far away as Rushden and Blisworth in Northamptonshire. Elizabeth Woodward joined the church in April, 1693.

The name Shepherd does not appear on the Stevington roll, but there were several of that name in the church at nearby Carlton, which became a separate fellowship in 1688 and for some years, under influences from the Independent church at Rothwell in Northants, practised infant baptism. Carlton is now a Strict Baptist church.

ERNEST A. PAYNE

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN, the 29th day of September 1694, I Steven Hawthorn of the parish of Steventon in the County of Bedford do make & ordain this my last will & testament in manner & form following First I bequeath my soul into the hands of God my maker hoping that through the death of Christ Jesus my redeemer to receive pardon of all my sinns & for my body to be buried at the discretion of my Executor hereafter nominated.

Item I give and bequeath unto Mary my beloved wife all the money which I had with her upon bond & also whatsoever I had with her upon surrender, & if what I have of my wives upon surrender shall be found according to law to fall to my son, then my will is that my son shall put my wife into full possession of the same she had it before her marriage with me, or also that he shall give her the full value of it in money.

Item I give and bequeath moreover unto my said wife fourty pounds of lawful money of England to be paid unto her within three months after my decease.

Item I give and bequeath also to my said wife all my household goods excepting some certain things hereafter nominated, as namely my best chest with six pair of sheets and one boardcloth therein, & one bedstead with the coverlids belonging to it standing in the chamber over the parlour, & six pewter dishes with one pewter candlestick all standing in the hall, and also one trunk in the parlour chamber. Item I give also to me said wife all my wearing apparell & all my fuel for the fire.

Item I give and bequeath unto my grandson Steven Shepherd that thirteen pounds upon bond in his fathers hands with the interest to be paid to him by his said father at the age of one & twenty years his said father having the use of it till then, and also one trunk with what is in it to be delivered to him at the said age and if my said grandson dieth before he arriveth at the said age of one & twenty years then the said thirteen pounds with the interest aforesaid, & the trunk with the goods in it, shall be equally divided among my son Steven Hawthorns children.

Item all the rest of my goods and chattells undisposed of I give and bequeath unto my son Steven Hawthorne upon condition that he shall pay all my debts legacies & funerall charges & do make him sole executor of this my last will & testament, In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day & year above written.

Witnesses

Edw. Bull

the mark of

Elizabeth + Woodward

Daniel Negus

Steven Hawthorne.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1975

The Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union will be held April 14-17th 1975 at Liverpool. Its residential character affects the timing of our own A.G.M. We shall meet in the Cathedral complex on Wednesday 16th at 9.30 a.m. Our speaker will be the Rev. G. D. Savage, B.A., B.D., and his subject "Hugh Stowell Brown" whose remarkable ministry in Liverpool from 1848 to 1886 deserves to be well remembered by us. Please book the date and time now and make sure you are with us. The Missionary Sermon will be delivered in the Cathedral at 11.00 a.m. so if you are with us at 9.30 you will be on hand for the Sermon later.

D.S.