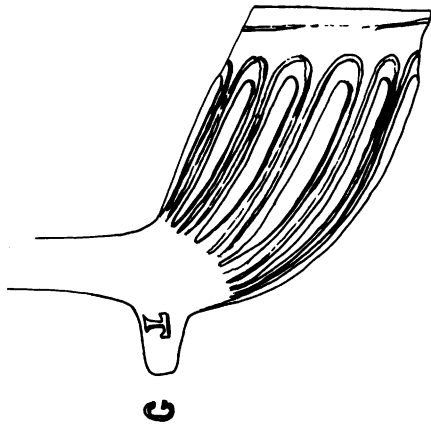


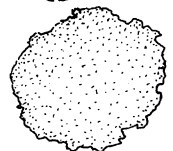


The Thorntons of Dorking

Clay Tobacco pipe
Makers

David
Higgins

George Thornton



B.A.R.

5, Centremead, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES, England.

GENERAL EDITORS

A.R. Hands, B.Sc., M.A., D.Phil.
D.R. Walker, M.A.

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THE THORNTONS OF DORKING: CLAY TOBACCO PIPE MAKERS

D.A. Higgins.

Research into the Thornton pipemaking family of Dorking has started to reveal the complex ways in which this trade was passed down through the generations. The interaction of family and workshop connections shows an unbroken tradition of pipemaking which can be followed from the early eighteenth century until 1924. Several of the makers and their movements have been traced as a result of questions posed by the date or distribution of recorded finds. It is gratifying to think that the identification and interpretation of archaeological material has reached the stage where hypotheses about the date, location and relationship of makers can be set up before the documentary sources are examined.

References in the parish registers show that Thorntons have been living in Dorking from at least the early seventeenth century (appendix II) although these have not been directly connected with the eighteenth century pipemakers. It is not until 1731 that any pipemaker has been recorded for the town, but then George Thornton I appears as a master pipemaker taking an apprentice. This suggests that he would have been born in the early years of the century, but as yet it is not known where he was apprenticed or exactly when he started pipemaking in Dorking. The apprentice he took (given in the Apprentices' Register Index at the Guildhall Library) was Richard Cheesman (son of Richard) of Dorking for a consideration of £5. Nothing is known of the later history of Richard, though there is a reference to someone of that name in the 1787 Court Rolls. In that year a Richard Cheesman was paying a quarterly rent of 2/- for part of Pound House in South Street, so it is possible that he remained as a pipemaker in Dorking. The only other apprentice George is known to have taken was William Westbrook, taken in 1762, also for £5. He has not been traced as a pipemaker either, although it may be significant that numerous varieties of late eighteenth century WW marks do occur in the north of the county.

Nothing is known of the early life of George until the Poor Rate Books which survive from 1759 and which run until his death towards the end of 1768. In one of these (1760) George is given as an Overseer of the Poor, indicating a certain amount of public standing within the community. The books also record the fact that he owned property in the Chipping Borough which was valued at £3.10.0. from 1759 until 1764. In 1765 it rose to £5.10.0. in value, but dropped again in 1766 to remain at £4.0.0. until the books end in 1771 (payments having been taken over in 1769 by his widow, Jane). In 1759 and 1760 George is also recorded as paying a rate on a piece of ground called "Lordship Garden" in the East Borough valued at £1.0.09.

Information about his property in Chipping Borough has been gained from a number of sources. We are fortunate in having the will of George Thornton (appendix I) in which he leaves his nephew (George Thornton II), "the Pipe-Trade & Stock ... with the use of the Pipe House & Yard". The Court Baron for 23 October 1771 also refers to the property;

"George Thornton late of Dorking in the County of Surrey
Pipemaker held freely to him and his heirs of the Lord of



Fig. 1: Dorking Tithe map showing Thornton's Property after 1776.

this Manor in the yearly rent of 1/6d, fealty, suit of Court, & other services all those 3 Tenements with the outhouses & buildings & yard & garden belonging and lying in the West Street in the town of Dorking and now in the several tenures or occupancies of Jane Thornton widow, William Finch, James Palmer & George Thornton and that the said George Thornton lately dyed seized of the aforesaid premises ... on relief of 1/6d to Jane his wife".

From these references we can see that the property that was valued at £4.0.0. after 1766 consisted of three tenements with outhouses, outbuildings (including the pipeshop), yard and garden. The rise in value to £5.10.0. given in the Poor Rates for 1765 must have been due to his buying another property, most of which he sold again within the year. This transaction was to George Lansdell - one of the witnesses of his will - and is mentioned in the Court Rolls for 1766;

'At this Court it is presented by the Homage & inrolled by the Steward there that George Thornton of Dorking in the Co. aforesaid Pipemaker lately held freely to him & his heirs of the Lord of the Manor by the yearly Rent of Sixpence ... relief, fealty, suit of Court & other services. All that Messuage or Tenement with the Garden & appurtenances thereto belonging situate on the South Side of the West Street of the Town of Dorking aforesaid & now in the occupation of George Lansdell Schoolmaster and that the said George Thornton since the last Court hath aliened the same premises with the Appurtenances unto the said George Lansdell and his heirs whereupon a Relief that is to say sixpence ... became due to the said Lord. Therefore it is now commanded that the Bailiff of this Manor distrain the said George Lansdell for the said Relief & for a Fealty'.

The location of the property which George Thornton kept has been traced through a later record in the Court Roll. This gives in an entry under 25 October 1794 the tenants of West Street, including on the South Side.

"George Bird	Two tenements (part of four called Banes) late George Thornton who aliened two to the said George Bird and the other two to William Lipscomb.
--------------	---

William Lipscomb	Two tenements part of Banes above in the occupation of Jacob ?Larob and John Barrett. The tenements called Banes were held by the rent of 1/6d. which is apportioned 1/- to George Bird and 6d to William Lipscomb."
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From the 1649 survey of Dorking it is possible to identify Banes, and so locate the property owned by Thornton on the Tithe Map (Figure 1). This shows the buildings referred to (shaded) although the gardens may have extended back further. The central 'L' shape section is described in the Tithe award as House, Workshop & Garden as opposed to the other areas which are just houses, cottages and gardens. It is therefore possible that this

is the pipehouse and yard referred to in the will. This site now lies underneath the old Fire Station, but would be well worth examining when any redevelopment in this area takes place.

The actual pipes made by the George Thorntons are somewhat hard to separate. Four basic types are represented from finds:- undecorated pipes with plain, dotted or crowned initials and those with fluted decoration (illustrated in Higgins 1981 - fig numbers are used below). Although it is easy to attribute the plain bowls to George I and the fluted to George III this cannot be the case - George II would have been making pipes before the death of George I in 1768, and the fluted types would not have been introduced until the 1780s. Both Georges must therefore have been making undecorated types.

The use of crowned (24.8) or dotted initials (24.7, 31.1) may therefore be significant in separating the two makers (although the presence of early (14.6) and late (24.10) forms of plain bowl argues against this). One complete plain GT type has been found at Ewell with a stem length of 305 mm (12"). Well dated groups need to be examined to find out the working dates of the mould types and thus to separate to some extent the products of the two makers.

The will of George Thornton I makes it clear that George II is his nephew - indeed he does not seem to have had any children or close relatives of his own. George II died in 1823 at the age of 75 which means he was born c. 1748 and would have been only about 20 when his uncle died. He clearly took over the workshop and would have carried on using the same moulds - in fact he may not have had any specifically made for him before 1768.

After 1768 he continued to live with his aunt who is given in the Land Tax Assessments which start in 1780 as the owner with herself and George II as occupiers. From 1783 'others' are mentioned until 1787 when Jane dies and George II becomes the owner with himself, 'and others' in occupation. In 1815 the property is transferred to William Lipscomb with George II and others in occupation. This situation continues until the death of both George and his wife, Jane, in 1823.

During the period 1773-88 a series of children of George and Jane Thornton are baptised. It is assumed that these are the children of George II, the only slight doubt being another George Thornton who appears in 1791. This George is described as a widower and marries Sarah Chaudler with Sarah Thornton as witness. Sarah is presumably the niece mentioned in the 1768 will, who also witnessed Jane Thornton's marriage to Thomas Greenfield, (Jane being another of the nieces). This suggests that all those people are related although this other George, old enough to be a widower in 1791, is not mentioned in the will. Like George I's brother(s) no other reference to this Thornton has been found. As least three of the ten children baptised died in infancy, and one of the survivors (Ann) had a base born daughter in 1802, reflecting perhaps something of the conditions in late eighteenth century West Street.

Of the four sons that survived childhood at least two are known to have been pipemakers. Thomas, who was born in 1788, was married to Georgina Eliza Putland Thornton by 1811 when they had a son, also called George (IV), baptized. They had a second son Thomas, (II), in 1815 when Thomas (I), is given specifically as a pipemaker in West Street. A few pipes marked TT

(e./g. Fig. 11.6) with or without leaf decoration have been found at Newdigate which may belong to this maker, although none have been found nearer Dorking. After this reference in 1815 no record of Thomas has been found.

Indeed after 1823 there are virtually no references to this family of Thorntons in Dorking. An exception is Thomas I's sister, Sarah, who died unmarried in 1837. It was in 1823 that both George II and his wife, Jane died and it seems probable that around this date there was migration of the family to London, the West Street property passing out of the family ownership. This was realised through an inquiry into the unusual distribution of pipestems marked W.THORNTON/JAMES ST HOXTON (Figure 16.22) which have been found in some numbers in and around Dorking.

William was the other son of George II who is recorded as a pipemaker. He was born in 1785 and had it not been for his named stems nothing would probably have been known about him or his family. After an extensive search the 1851 census returns proved that the William Thornton at 36 Great James Street, Hoxton, had been born in Dorking. He was given as a tobacco pipe maker employing four men and had a fifty-nine year old woman (given as a tobacco pipe trimmer) and a William Barton (thirty-six, tobacco pipe maker) living with him. Also in the house that night was a girl visiting the pipe trimmer (presumably her daughter) and a niece, Ann Elizabeth Thornton, (ten), who had been born in Shoreditch.

Ann Elizabeth may in fact have been a daughter of George IV who was living nearby at 12 James Square and working as a cabinet maker. The fact that other members of the family from Dorking are living in this area is important firstly in explaining the sudden end of Thornton references in Dorking (no Thorntons at all were noted in a quick search through the 1841 Dorking census) and secondly in light of a burial noted at St. John the Baptist, New North Road, Hoxton in 1837. It was of a George Thornton of Great James Street, aged sixty-four. This would give a birth date about 1773 - the same year William's brother George III, was born. In view of the corresponding age and address it seems most likely that this is also a Dorking Thornton, last recorded there in 1795 when a son, James, was baptised. Equally significant is the fact that a George Thornton is recorded (Oswald 1975, p. 147) pipemaking at Grays Inn Lane from 1809-11, and since George III was the eldest son of a pipemaking family this could well be the same person.

Also living in the area another previously unrecorded Thornton pipemaker was found - this time in a baptism at St. John's in 1833. It was of James John, son of Thomas and Eliza Sophia Thornton - Thomas being given as a pipemaker in Whitmore Place. Although this Thomas has not been tied into the family it would seem a strong possibility. William, however, remains the best documented, being recorded at 45 Holywell Lane in 1823 - the year his parents died. Although the directories have not been searched systematically he seems to have moved to 33 Great James Street by 1839 (Pigot & Co.) and to 36 by 1841 (P O Dir) where he is recorded until 1854. His workshop was taken over by 1856 by Charles Crop, founder of the well known firm of Charles Crop & Sons which functioned until c. 1924 (Oswald 1975, p. 133). While the 1854 reference is the last recorded for this large and complex pipemaking family it is perhaps fitting that their workshop gave rise to such a well known firm as Crop's.

The actual products of William are a bit of a problem in themselves.

Around Dorking WT marks are quite common with the named stems (16.22), plain bowls with leaf decoration down the front (16.18) and at least two different types of fox and grapes pipe (11.15). Other types with flutes and leaf decoration and probably plain bowls also occur around Dorking. Other than Newdigate none of these types have been found outside the immediate Dorking area. Conversely 140 WT pipes with either masonic or leaf decoration (31.11) have been found at Ewell, only one of which has been found at Dorking.

Since the named stems undoubtedly come from Hoxton it would seem all those types occurring around Dorking can be attributed to William. Whether the Ewell types - which seem to be in a rather different style - are, remains to be seen. Initially it was assumed that William moved back to Dorking after his father's death to carry on the business - but London directories show this was not the case. Also it is unlikely that one of his brothers used an old mould of his in Dorking - or indeed any other pipemaker since none are listed there in 1841. It seems that despite other makers being much nearer William must have continued to supply Dorking with a variety of pipe types for some time - and despite the family all seeming to have moved to Shoreditch. Such an arrangement is most unusual and against the principle of local manufacture and supply being an essential part of the trade.

It would be useful to know how he arranged the shipment of pipes to Dorking and what happened to the other members of the family. A summary of the information about the family is given below (appendix II) together with a simple family tree (Fig. 2). There is still much to discover about the origins of pipemaking in the family, and what happened to the otherwise unrecorded Richard Cheesman and William Westbrook. In addition little is known of the later lives of George II's children and in particular what happened to Thomas, a recorded maker, and how the Thomas Thornton of Whitmore Place may tie into the family. Perhaps now that the outline of the family's background and movements in London have been established workers in that area will be able to tie in additional references and products to complete the family's history as pipemakers.

APPENDIX I

This is a transcript of the will of George Thornton (I) of Dorking. The original document is held in the Greater London Record Office (Document DW/PA/5/1769/40) who have kindly allowed it to be reproduced here. The will was proved on 8th June 1769.

"In the Name of God Am. I George Thornton of the Parish of Dorking in the County of Surry Pipemaker calling to mind the shortness and uncertainty of this mortal life and being of sound and perfect Mind and Memory do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament in writing in the following manner, that is to say, First and principally I give and recommend my Soul into the Hands of Almighty God that gave it, and my Body I commit to the Earth to be decently buried at the discretion of my Executors herein after named & as to my Worldly Estate and Effects wherewith the Almighty hath been pleas'd to bless me, I dispose thereof in the following manner. First I give and bequeath to my Wife Jane Thornton all my Personal and real Estate with every my Goods & Chattles during the Time of her natural Life, Also I give and bequeath unto Jane Greenfield my Niece the Sum of Seventy Pounds. Also I give unto

George Thornton my Nephew the Sum of twenty Pounds, Item I give unto Elizabet Weller my Niece the Sum of ten Pounds, Item I give unto Ann Thornton my Niece the Sum of ten Pounds, Item I give unto Sarah Thornton my Niece the Sum of ten Pounds. Which Legaces shall be paid out of my real Estate, which shall be sold after my Wife's discease. But if my Nephew George Thornton likes to take the Messuage with all the Appurtenances thereto belonging into his own Hands, & to pay off the said Legaces, it shall be at his Will. But it is my mind & Will that my Nephew George Thornton shall after my Discease have the Pipe-Trade & stock wholly to himself with the Use of the Pipe House & Yard, by paying to my said Wife the Sum of two Pounds per Year. to be paid Quarterly. But it is my Mind and Will that if my said Wife Jane Thornton should not live to spend all the above mentioned Goods & Chattles, that the Remainder thereof shall be at her own Disposal. And I hereby make and appoint my loving Friend Samuel New, full and sole Executor of this my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking, disannuling & making Void all my former Wills & Bequests by me made And declaring this only to be my last Will & Testament. In Witness whereof I have Hereunto set my Hand & Seal this 19th Decem^r. 1767."

The document is signed and sealed by George Thornton with John Ray, Thomas Philps and George Landsell as witnesses.

APPENDIX II

This gives a summary of the main sources referring to the Thornton family. I am grateful to Mr. D. Barker, Miss. A. Floyd, Mrs. B. Higgins, Mr. M. Higgins, Miss. D. Mercer, Mr. A. Oswald, Mr. J. Walker and Miss. G. Yates all of whom have helped in collecting this information and to the staff at the Dorking Museum, Greater London Record Office, Guildhall Library, Public Record Office and Surrey Record Office where these records are stored. In addition I am grateful to Mrs. B. Higgins for preparing the 1840 map of Dorking for publication, and to Miss. K. Howard for typing the rough draft of this paper and the Thornton family tree.

Abbreviations for the sources are:-

CR - Census Returns	AR - Apprenticeship Registers
DCR - Dorking Court Rolls	HPR - Hoxton Parish Registers
DPR - Dorking Parish Registers	LTA - Land Tax Assessments
PR - Dorking Poor Rates	W - Will
FB - Freeholders Books	DIR - Directories

1618 DPR William Paulmer marries Marye Thornton.

1630 DPR William Thornden, burial.

1631 DPR Jane, wife of Richard Thornton, burial.

1632 DPR Richard Thornton, aged 62, burial.

1681 DPR John Thornton, burial.

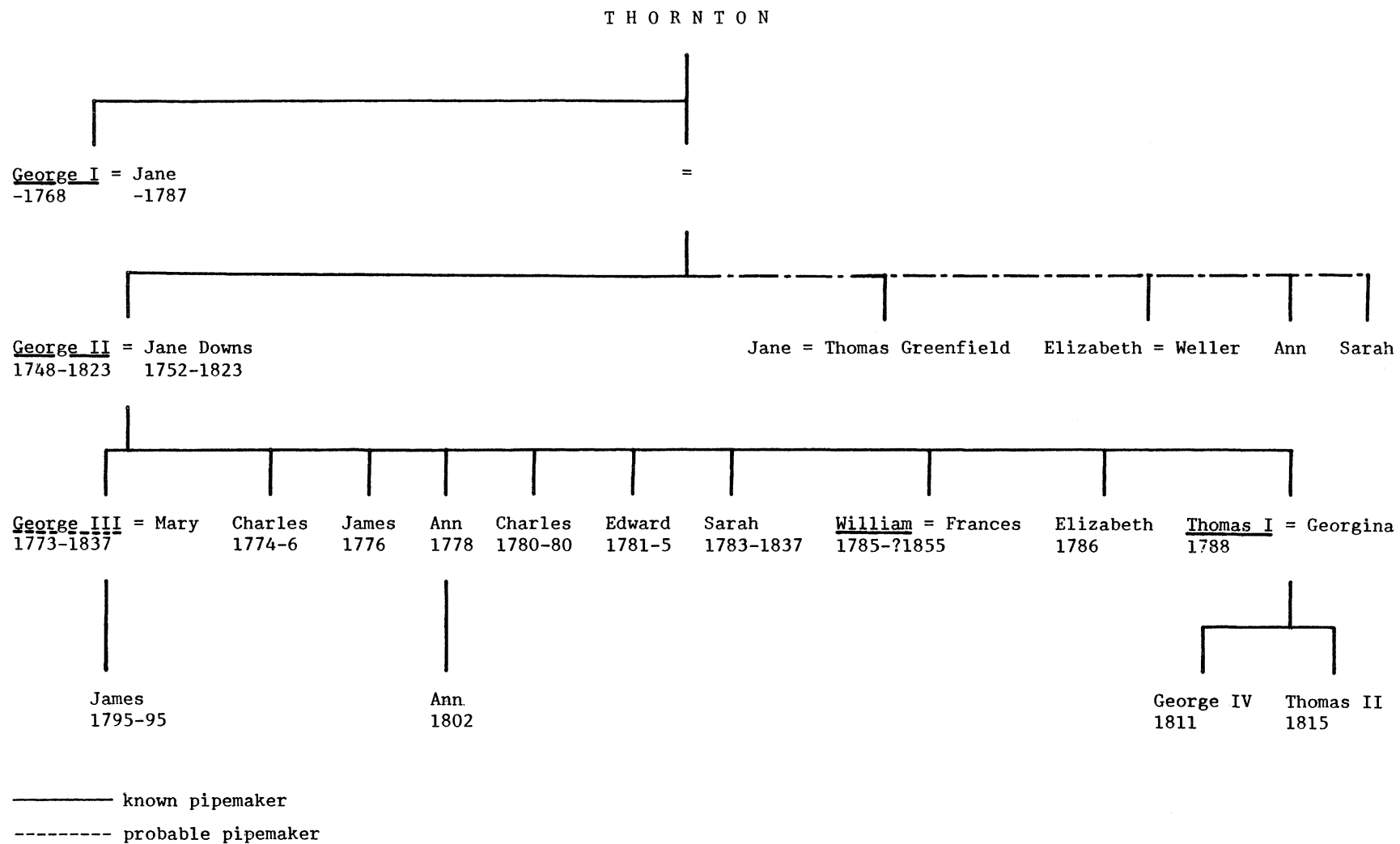


Fig. 2: The Thorntons' Family Tree.

1731	AR	Richard Cheesman apprenticed to George Thornton.
1756	DPR	Thomas Greenfield marries Jane Thornton.
1759	PR	George Thornton appears with land in Chipping and East Boroughs.
1760	PR	George Thornton signs the Poor Rate Book as an Overseer of the Poor.
1761	DPR	John Peter marries Elizabeth Thornton.
1762	AR	William Westbrook apprenticed to George Thornton.
1762	FB	George Thornton appears.
1766	DCR	Sale of land in West Street from George Thornton to George Landsell.
1767	W	Will of George refers to wife, Jane, and nephew/nieces, George, Jane Greenfield, Elizabeth Weller, Ann and Sarah - see appendix 1.
1768	DPR	George Thornton burial.
1769	PR	Widow Thornton takes over payments in Chipping Borough.
1771	DCR	Record of transfer of property to Jane, George II and others in occupation.
1771	PR	Poor rates end.
1773	DPR	George Thornton marries Jane Downs, John Nettfold and Sarah Thornton witnesses.
1773	DPR	George, son of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.
1774	DPR	Charles, son of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.
1776	DPR	Charles, son of George and Jane Thornton, burial.
1776	DPR	James, son of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.
1778	DPR	Ann, daughter of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.
1778	DPR	Thomas Bland marries Sarah Greenfield, Sarah Thornton as a witness.
1780	DPR	Charles, son of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.
1780	DPR	Charles, son of George and Jane Thornton, burial.
1780	DPR	James Ottoway marries Sarah Worsfold, Sarah Thornton a witness.
1780	LTA	LTA starts with Jane Thornton, owner.

1781 LTA George appears as an occupier under Jane Thornton's entry.

1781 DPR Edward, son of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.

1783 DPR Sarah, daughter of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.

1785 DPR William, son of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.

1785 DPR Edward, son of George and Jane Thornton, burial.

1786 DPR Elizabeth, daughter of George and Jane Thornton, baptism.

1787 DPR Jane, wife of George Thornton, burial.

1787 LTA George Thornton becomes owner of Chipping Borough property.

1788 DPR Thomas, son of George and Jane, baptism.

1791 DPR George Thornton, widower, marries Sarah Chaudler, Sarah Thornton a witness.

1794 DCR George Bird and William Lipscombe given as owning 4 tenements called Banes with George Thornton given as a tenant to William Lipscombe.

1795 DPR James, son of George and Mary Thornton, baptism.

1795 DPR James, son of George and Mary Thornton, burial.

1802 DPR Ann, daughter of Ann Thornton, base born, baptism.

1802 DPR Rebekah (sic) Thornton, age 91, burial.

1811 DPR George, son of Thomas and Georgina Eliza Putland Thornton, baptism.

1813 FB Last entry of George Thornton.

1815 LTA William Lipscombe becomes owner of the Chipping Borough property with George Thornton and others as occupiers.

1815 DPR Thomas, son of Thomas and Georgina Eliza Putland Thornton, baptism. Thomas is given as a pipemaker.

1823 DPR Sarah Thornton, West Street, age 71, burial.

1823 DPR George Thornton, West Street, age 75, burial.

1823 DIR William Thornton working at 45 Holywell Lane, Shoreditch.

1828 DPR Maria Watkins Thornton, West Street, age 9, burial.

1830 HPR Thomas Thornton, Essex Street, age 80, burial.

1833 HPR James John, son of Thomas (occ. pipemaker) and Eliza Sophia Thornton of Whitmore Place, baptism.

- 1837 DPR Sarah Thornton, Butter Hill, age 52, burial.
- 1837 HPR George Thornton, Great James Street, age 64, burial.
- 1939 HPR Thomas Thornton, Paul Street, age 29, burial.
- 1839 HPR William James Thornton, Mark Street, age 2, burial.
- 1841 HPR William John, son of William George (?town traveller) and Ann Thornton, Nicholas Street, baptism.
- 1851 CR 12 James Square, Shoreditch:-

George Thornton, Head, age 40, Cabinet Maker born in Dorking. Elizabeth Thornton, wife, age 54, born in Tower Hamlets, Middlesex. Also in occupation, William Repton, 54, a shoemaker from Derbyshire with his wife and three children.
- 1851 CR 36 Great James Street, Shoreditch:-

William Hornton, Head, age 66, Tobacco pipemaker employing four men, born in Dorking. Frances Thornton, wife, age 48, born in Leeds, Kent. Ann Elizabeth Thornton, neice, age 10, scholar, born in Shoreditch. Also in occupation, Sarah ? Meite, 59, tobacco pipe trimmer born at Rotherhithe and her ? daughter, visiting, and William Barton, 36, tobacco pipemaker born in Shoreditch.
- 1854 DIR Last reference to William Thornton, pipemaker at 36 Great James Street.

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