

THE THORNYCROFT FAMILIES OF CHESHIRE  
THEIR GENEALOGY AND HISTORY

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Erdington Birmingham 24

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*Family History Society  
of Cheshire*

INDEX

	Page		Page
Introduction	1	Thornicroft of North Rode to Eaton	78
Chart of Location of families	2	Genealogy Table 22 1639 to 1793	78
Derivation & distribution of name	3	Thornicroft of North Rode to Macclesfield	79
Locations in Cheshire Map 1777	5	Genealogy Table 23 to 1838	80
		Historic Notes	
Siddington Township History			
J.P.Farwaker 1890 Photostats	6	Thornicroft from Eaton to Astbury & Gawsworth	83
		Genealogy Tables 24 to 28 1693 to 1961	83
Siddington Family 13th c to 1831		Genealogy Table 30 1824 to 1976	89
Genealogy Tables 1 to 6	12		
		Thornicroft from Gawsworth to London	
Branch to London & Milcombe Oxon		Genealogy Table 29 (John & Hamo Thornicroft)	88
Genealogy Table 7 1616 to 1743	18	Thornicroft from Gawsworth to North Rode	
Branch to London 1614 to 1720		Genealogy Table 31 1806 to 1870	90
Genealogy Table 8	19		
		Historic Notes 1708 to 1944	91
Transfer name 'Thornycroft' to			
Rev Mytton 1831 to 1970		Thornicroft Graves and Memorials at Gawsworth	102
Genealogy Tables 9,10	20		
		Thornicrofts at Astbury (& Coventry & Burton	
Notes on Genealogy & History	22	on Trent) 1745 to 1850	
Notes on Property Interests	32	Genealogy Tables 32,33	105
Grants of Arms to Thornycroft			
of Siddington et al	41	Thornicroft at Harbourne, Birmingham	
		Genealogy Table 34 1940 to 1975	107
Thornicroft at Macclesfield to 1799		Historic Notes Astbury etc	108
Genealogy Tables 11 to 16	50		
Historic Notes	56	Thornicroft at Little Moreton Hall, Odd Rode	
		Genealogy Table 35 1739 to 1871	111
		Historic Notes	112
Thornicroft of North Rode 1560	67		
and to Congleton (Family)	69		
Genealogy Tables 17 to 21	67		
Historic Notes	72		

Introduction      The genealogy and history of the various branches of the Thornicrofts of Cheshire

The Thornicrofts of Cheshire are first mentioned in the 13th century as 'of Thornicroft in Siddington' and lived at Thornicroft Hall there until the death of the last member of this historic branch in 1817. The name, arms and property were then transferred to the Mytton family under the terms of a Will. A cadet branch was established at Macclesfield in 1615 and lived there until c1790 when it became extinct in the male line.

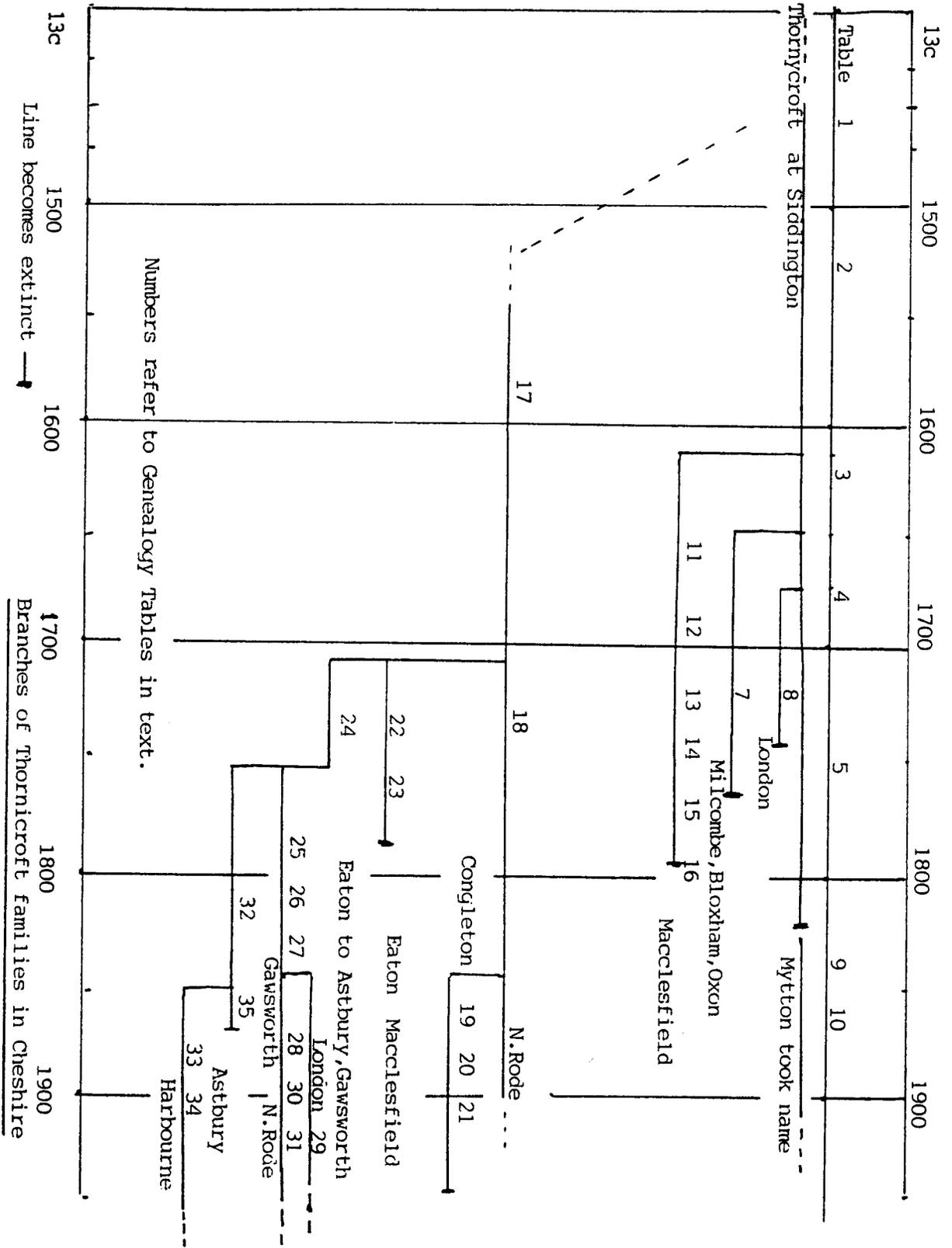
Two other branches of the Siddington Thornicrofts arose, one living at Stockwell in London and at Milcombe Bloxham, Oxon and the other in London. Both of these became extinct in a few generations.

Other Thornicrofts emerge by name when the Registers were started after 1538 and farmers well established at North Rode by 1560 probably originated from the Siddington family. After the extinction of the Siddington family in 1817 the continuity of the name Thornicroft in Cheshire arose from descendants of the North Rode farmers who established a branch at Eaton from which a number of farming families participated in Gawsforth and Astbury flourished. In the early 19th century a natural genius was born to the family at Farming Tidonock Farm in Gawsforth. Thomas Thornicroft, son of John and Ann Cheetham, showed an early skill at carving and sculpting and was sent to London for training and married Mary Francis who did sculptures of the Royal children of Victoria at Osborne House. He was also proficient as an engineer and his two sons John Isaac and William Hamo became respectively an eminent naval engineer and a major sculptor in Victorian and Edwardian times.

In Cheshire the Thornicrofts lived in the Eastern part in an area centred on Siddington and Gawsforth and bounded on the north by Macclesfield and to the south by Astbury and Odd Rode and until the mid 19th cent. there was little movement outside this area except for the London families mentioned above.

Historic data which was incidental to the genealogical study accumulated and is reprocessed as notes associated with the genealogical tables and together with some of their property interests adds some interest to their lives and problems.

The compiler gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Vicars and their wives in providing information from Church Registers and records and to the staff of Chester Record Office for their professional help and provision of many documents.



The derivation of the name THORNYCROFT, its distribution in England and the Cheshire families.

The name is from the Anglo Saxon words 'þornig crofte' meaning a 'thorny place' and when surnames were added to the personal names of people about the 12th century they took the form of a personal characteristic, an occupation or of the place name where people dwelt. Thornycroft is therefore a place name and as 'thorny places' must be widespread it would be expected to be a widespread name.

However this is not so and only one reference has been found in the Calendars of Rolls which date from the 12th to 18th centuries and contain several million names/places. This is dated May 12 1301 and is the grant (by the Crown) to the Abbott of Thornton on Humber for a weekly market at the manor of Flaxeflete in Yorkshire. It also gives 'free warren to all the demense lands in Thornycroft in Co. York. (Free warren was the right to establish rabbit warrens as a source of food and was a jealously guarded right)

Occasional references to the name occur as in 1460 when Henry 6 granted a general pardon, six months after the battle of Bloreheath (War of the Roses Sep 23 1459) to the Lancastrian Army under Lord Audley of 10,000 men of Lancs. and Cheshire. "Among the survivors of the battle was John Thornycroft".

The Thornycrofts of Cheshire are named as being established at "Thornycroft' near Siddington (close to Gawsforth) by the 13th century when a deed without date, states that "Richard, lord of Siddington, confirms and quit claims to Richard, son of Hamo de Thornycroft, all his rights etc in certain lands and tenements in a certain place called Thornycroft in Sydyngton, which William, grandfather of the said Richard, had given in frank marriage to the said Hamo de Thornycroft with Joan daughter of the said William de Sydyngton, paying annually 6d. to the said William and his heirs.

The full text and the genealogies of the Henshaw and Thornycroft Families (John Thornycroft was to marry Eleanor Henshaw, heiress to the Henshaw estate in 1712) are given in the photostat pages from J.P. Earwaker's "East Cheshire - Past and present" 1887.

Registers of births, marriages and burials commenced to be kept by the Churches in 1538 (some survive from much later dates) so it is only after these Register commence that full pedigrees of families can be constructed and prior to this only the names of successors with property rights are likely to be found.

In consequence names will be found in the early registers who cannot be traced to earlier ancestors and an example of this are Thornycrofts farming at North Rode in 1560 who are most probably a branch of the Thornycrofts of Siddington and are important as the progenitors of all the Cheshire Thornycrofts today as the Siddington family died out in 1817.

The Thornycrofts were at Thornycroft Hall in Siddington for 600 years from the 13th to 19th centuries but in 1817 Edward Thornycroft died without heirs and his two surviving sisters who did not marry died by 1831.

Under the terms of his will Edward left the name Thornycroft, the Arms and estate to his friend the Rev. Charles Mytton, rector of Eccleston in Cheshire who assumed these by royal decree on Oct 19. 1831 This family lived at the Hall until cir 1900 and references to Thornycrofts after relate to the Myttons.

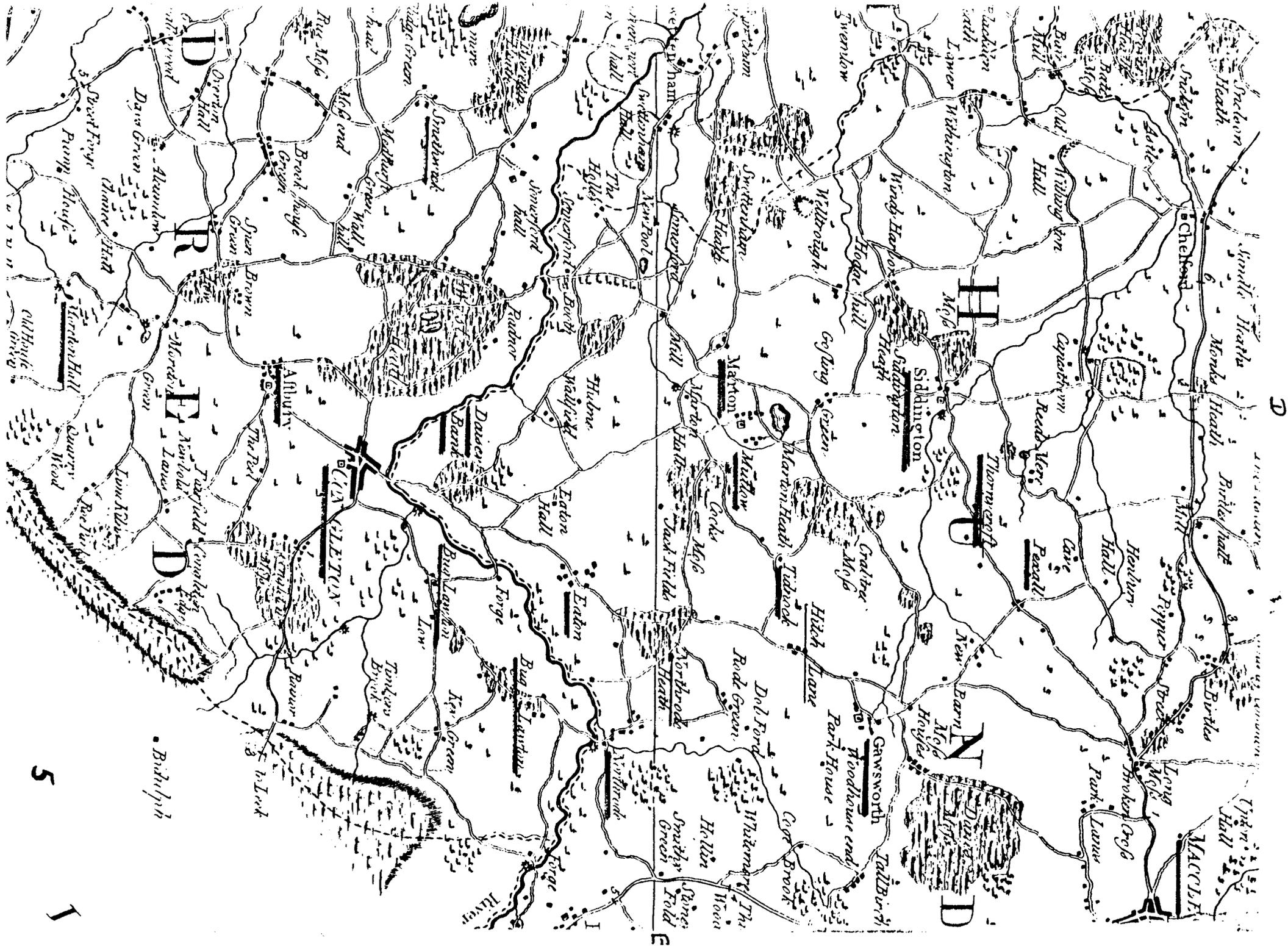
Over the period of 600 years Thornycroft Hall must have been rebuilt three or four times.

The present Hall is sited on the right hand side of the road from Siddington to Macclesfield and is a well constructed Georgian building dating from 1780 /1800 when Edward had it rebuilt. It is sited in pleasant park land with two ornamental pools formed by damming a small stream and the present site is probably considerably smaller than previously. After the death of Edward it is recorded that the Myttons considerably enlarged the Hall and its excellent state of building may reflect subsequent work. After c 1900 the Myttons who had other properties ceased to dwell there and the building was in the hands of tenants and after the 1939/45 war was sold to Nuns of the Pallatine Order who use it as a home for children from Manchester. It has now been renamed 'Pallotti Hall' on the O.S.map although the pools retain the Thornycroft name.

On the map of 1777 shown in the photostat copy, Thornycroft appears to be on the left hand side of the Siddington to Macclesfield road suggesting that the house was resited when rebuilt cir 1790 and the absence of the pools on the stream may indicate that they were formed at this date.

A description of the Hall in 1631 and 1637 when Edward (2) and Edward (3) Thornycroft made their wills is given on page 27 and is of two stories, the lower having five rooms and appears to be of that period with a Hall, Parlour Kitchen and Store Chambers and would have a cross passage and of timber construction and roofing.

The Cheshire Thornycrofts are probably unique in having a recorded history covering 700 years and it is probable that in the period to cir 1600 there will be Thornicrofts from Cheshire who moved to adjacent counties of Lancashire, Shropshire Derby and Staffs whose descendants appears in the registers of those counties. The I.G.I data and other records show that there were Thornicrofts in Sussex at Hastings and elsewhere in the late 1500's and later and a substantial number in an area covering the Northampton Warwickshire Oxfordshire boundary. It is therefore possible that these are derived from local families taking the name Thornicroft and not from the Cheshire family.



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## Siddington Domesday.

THIS Township is very fully described in the Domesday Survey in 1086, as follows :—

Isdem *Bigot* tenet SUDENDUNE. *Brynn* tenuit et liber homo fuit. Ibi 1 hida et dimidia gelabiles. Terra est vii. carucate. Ibi unus francigena habet dimidiam carucatum et 1 villanus et 1 bordarius cum dimidia carucata. Ibi silva 1 leuva long et dimidia lana. Tempore regis Edwardi valebat xx<sup>4</sup> solidos. Modo v. solid os.

The same *Bigot* holds SUDENDUNE. *Brynn* held it and was a free man. There is 1 hide and a half rateable to the gelt [tax]. The land is 7 carucates. A foreigner there has half a carucate, and there are 1 villen and 1 bordar [cottager] with half a carucate. There is a wood 1½ miles long and half as broad. In King Edwards [the Confessor's] time it was worth 20 shillings, now 5 shillings.

Bigot, the Norman holder of the manor, also held the manors of Alderley, Mobberley, North Rode, Congleton, Sandbach, &c., and was the ancestor of the Ardernes, of Aldford. Under them Siddington was held by a family who bore the local name, but of whom now little is known. From the similarity of the coat of arms ascribed to them, it has been imagined that they were a branch of the Davenports. Of the Siddingtons a very curious account has been preserved by Roger Dodsworth in his MSS., now in the Bodleian Library, and copied from the deeds, &c., of the Fittons, formerly preserved at Gawsworth. This account was drawn up in 1457, as follows :—

To all trewe men of Christ that this wryting hear or see. Wee, John Davenport, the elder, of Davenport, Hugh Davenport, of Henbury, Jankin Davenport, of Bromall, Esquires, John of Byrcelles, John of Shrigley, John of Sutton, Rawlin of Legh, and Philip of Accon, send greeting, &c. In as meche as it is meritory and alwys to bere witness in the truth, we witness and record that Jankin [or John] Legh of Legh, Thomas of the Falghes [Fallows], Richard of Barneshegh, and Jenkin Neld, the which ben of the eldest men in all this country, they have recordet and taken upon there charge, before us and many other gentlemen and yemen, that *Huchon* [*Richard*] of *Syddyncton*, the which was called “Huchon of Syddyncton with the grete halle,” was lord of Syddyncton, lawfully gotten [begotten], the which Huchon had issue, lawfully gotten, *Hugh*, the which Hugh had issue, lawfully gotten, *William*, the which William had issue, lawfully gotten, *Jankyn* [*John*], the which Jankyn had issue, lawfully gotten, *Robert*, the which now is, and that there was never man that made clayme to the sayd Lordship of Syddyncton in the dayes of the foresayd Huchon, Hugh, William, Jankyn and Robert, as sothe [true] as ever they knewe or heard speake of unto this day; and this they have taken upon there charge as they shall answer before god. Into the witness of which thing we to this presente wryting have put our seales. Geven the 8th day of October, 36 Henry VI. [1457.]

RICHARD DE SYDDYNGTON was living in 1351, when, by an Inquisition taken in that year,<sup>b</sup> it was returned “that Sir John de Arderne, chevalier, father of Sir Thomas de Arderne, chevalier, that now is, holding directly from the Earl of Chester, by Barony, had alienated to Richard de Syddyncton and . . . his wife and the heirs of their bodies, all his lands and tenements in Syddyncton, and they are valued at 10 marks per annum.”

<sup>a</sup> Dodsworth MSS., Bodleian Library, vol. xxxix. ff. 107 to 117.

<sup>b</sup> This Inquisition was taken at Macclesfield before Thomas le Yonge, Escheator of Cheshire, on Thursday, the 18th April, 25 Edward III. [1351], by the oath of William del Downes, of

Shrygelegh, Richard de Hammeshawe, Hugh del Sherd, William de Henneshawe, Richard de Bradelegh, Richard le Wardle, Richard de Stanlegh, Randle de Wyberham, Thomas de Swetenham, Richard Broun, of Syrale, Adam del Bromynghe, senior, and John de Coton.

The "manor of Sydyngton" is also referred to in another Inquisition taken in 1379,<sup>6</sup> when it was stated, that Edward, late Prince of Wales [the Black Prince] had been seised of "two parts of the manor of Sydyngton," in consequence of a certain fine levied by Richard de Sydyngton. HUCH DE SYDYNGTON, the second person named in the above narrative pedigree, was living in 1357, in which year he had a pardon on account of his services in Gascony, and especially at the battle of Poitiers.<sup>7</sup> WILLIAM DE SYDYNGTON, his son, was one of the commissioners appointed on Feb. 24, 1399, to raise 80 of the best archers between the ages of 16 and 60, in the Hundred of Northwich, and to have them by a certain date on the road outside the Watergate of the City of Chester, thence to be conducted to Ireland.<sup>8</sup> JOHN DE SYDYNGTON was living in 1417, and the ROBERT SYDYNGTON, his son, named in the above deed as living in 1457, made his will in 1474.<sup>9</sup>

In the name of God, Amen. Año Dñi 1474. ROBERT SYDYNGTON, of Sydyngton, makes his will in the following manner. First, he leaves his soul to God, &c., and his body to be buried in the Chapel of Merton. Item he leaves to the Chapel of Sydyngton, 6s. 8d., and to the aforesaid chapel [of Merton] 40d., and for the building of the bell tower of Gouseworth 40d. Item to Roger de Acton and to Roger de Henshaw, each two heifers (*butails*), aged 2 years. To *William de Sydyngton*, his son, one young bullock (*juncenaw*), aged 2 years. To Robert Fitton, junior, one sheep. Also he wills, that *Sizyl*, his daughter, shall have 20 marks, and the residue of goods to his wife; and he wills that all his lands shall remain wholly to *Edward Fitton and Emma* his wife, and their heirs for ever, and appoints his wife and the said Edward Fitton his executors.

In accordance with the above will the manor of Siddington passed to the Fittons in consequence of the marriage of Edward Fitton, of Gawsworth, Esq., with Emma, the daughter and heiress of the above-named Robert Sydyngton. Another branch of this family is also met with in early deeds, &c., as holding lands in this township, which are frequently called "the third part of the manor of Sydyngton."<sup>10</sup>

In the *Inquisitions post mortem* of the Fittons, from the year 1510 (as see under Gawsworth) the manor of Siddington is regularly mentioned. Thomas Fitton, of Siddington, gent., who was buried at Gawsworth on April 20, 1600, where a brass was placed to his memory (as see under Gawsworth), was the younger brother of Sir Edward Fitton, of Gawsworth, Knt., Lord President of Connaught, and Treasurer of Ireland. From the Fittons it passed with Gawsworth through the Gerards to the Mohuns, the latter of whom are found presenting to the Chapel in the 17th century. Early in the 18th century the manor was sold to John Ward, of Capesthorpe, Esq., and has descended with the Capesthorpe estates to William Bromley Davenport, Esq., M.P., who is lord of the manor. Lands in Siddington were owned from an early period by the Davenports, of Davenport and Marton, and also by a family named Leges, from whom they passed to the Parkers of Coppenhall.<sup>11</sup> SIDDINGTON HALL, now a farmhouse, is a

<sup>6</sup> Taken at Sydyngton before John de Scollehal, Escheator, the Thursday next before the feast of the Annunciation of our Lady [March 25], 2 Richard II. [1379], by the oath of Robert de Sydyngton, Thomas Fyton, of Downall, John de Chorley, of Chorley, Richard de Thornecroft, Richard de Henshagh, William le Walker, Robert le Mason, Thomas del Hogh, Henry Pigotte, Adam del Brometes, Kandle de Vernon, and Hugh de Henshagh.

<sup>7</sup> Cheshire Recognition Rolls.—Record Office.

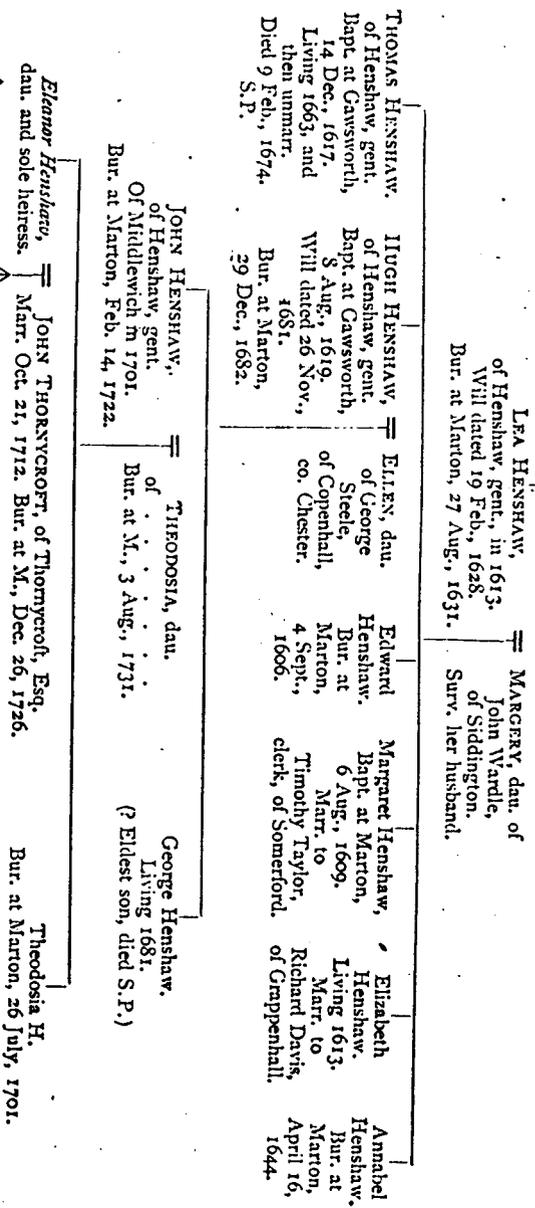
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* *Ibid.* He was living in 1406.

<sup>9</sup> Fitton deeds, Dodsworth MSS., Bodleian Library, vol. xxxix. There are many other Siddington deeds in this collection. Robert's wife was named Ellen.

<sup>10</sup> An *Inq. p. m.* was taken in 1361, after the death of Christiana, daughter of Edmund de Sydyngton. In the same year Ellen, the widow of Edmund de Sydyngton, enters a suit against Randal de Sydyngton for dower of lands in Sydyngton. (Cheshire Plea Rolls.)

<sup>11</sup> Dodsworth MSS., vol. xxxix.—Bodleian Library.



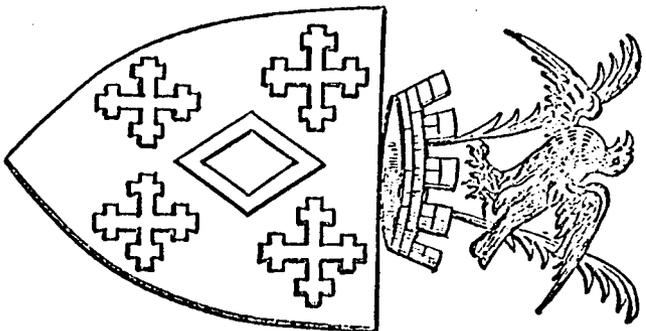


THE THORNYCROFTS were settled at Thornycroft about the 13th century, but their names are rarely met with on the Cheshire Recognizance or Plea Rolls. In Harl. MSS., 2131, is a small collection of deeds relating to this family, the earliest of which is one without date, by which "Richard, lord of Siddington, confirms and quit claims to Richard, the son of Hamo de Thornicroft, all his right &c. in certain lands and tenements in a certain place called Thornicroft in Sydyngton, which William, grandfather of the said Richard, had given in frank marriage to the said Hamo de Thornicroft with Joan daughter of the said William de Sydyngton, paying annually 6d. to the said William and his heirs." In 1688, a very full pedigree of the Thornycrofts (upon which the accompanying pedigree is chiefly based) was entered at the Herald's College by Gregory King, Rouge Dragon, but they did not enter at any of the Cheshire Visitations. EDWARD THORNYCROFT, Esq., the last of this ancient family, having no issue, left his estates to his two sisters, *Eleanor* and *Ann* Thornycroft, for their lives, with remainder to his friend, the *Rev. Charles Mytton*, rector of Eccleston, co. Chester (descended from the family of Mytton, co. Salop). Mr. Thornycroft died 20 January, 1817, and his two sisters on the 20 June, 1823, and 6 Sept., 1831, respectively; and on the 29 Oct., 1831, Mr. Mytton, by Royal licence, took the name and arms of Thornycroft only, as desired by Mr. Thornycroft's will.

THE REV. CHARLES THORNYCROFT married for his first wife, on 26 June, 1802, Henrietta, the eldest daughter of the Hon. John Grey, third son of Henry, fourth Earl of Stamford and Warrington, and by her, who died in 1812, had issue; and secondly, in 1826, Elizabeth Kynaston, only daughter of the Hon. Booth Grey. He died in 1840, and was succeeded by his second son (his eldest son, Charles Richard, having predeceased him in 1833), the REV. JOHN THORNYCROFT, now of Thornycroft Hall (born 22 Jan., 1809), who married 20 July, 1848, Charlotte Blanche, daughter of John Beaumont Swete, Esq., of Orton Hall, co. Devon, by whom he has Charles Edward Thornycroft, son and heir-apparent, and other issue.

### Thorncroft of Thorncroft.

*Authorities:* From a pedigree drawn up from deeds, &c., in 1688, by Gregory King, Rouge Dragon, and entered at the Herald's College. Harl. MS. 2119 and 1535. Gawsworth, Marlon, and Sid-dington Registers, &c.



*Arms:* Vert, a mascle Or, between four cross-crosslets Argent.

*Crest:* On a mural crown Gules a falcon volant proper jessed, membered and beaked Or, between two palm-branches of the last.

EDWARD THORNCROFT, gent. Living 1577 and 1613. Marr. Sept. 4 April, 1577. ? Bur. at Gawsworth, 1 Aug. 1631.

1. EDWARD = ALICE, dau. of Henry Adderley, of Blackhaugh, gent. Bap. at Gawsworth, 1 July, 1579. Marr. Sett. dated 8 Feb., 1613-14. Died 1637, *æd.* 58. Bur. at Gawsworth, .. Sept., 1637.

HAWO DE THORNCROFT. = JOAN, dau. of William de Syddington.  
RICHARD DE THORNCROFT. =  
RICHARD DE THORNCROFT, of Peshull. = MARGERY, dau. of Allen de Capeshorne. Living 1361.

RICHARD THORNCROFT, of Thorncroft. Living 1413, and called senior.

RICHARD THORNCROFT, of Thorncroft. Living 1413 and 1430.

HUGH THORNCROFT, of Thorncroft. Living 1436.

ROBERT THORNCROFT, of Thorncroft. Living 1502.

..... dau. of .. . Duncalf, of Foxhurst.

EDWARD THORNCROFT, of Thorncroft. Living 1502, 1513, and 1536. Marr. at the Collegiate Church, Manchester, 13 Feb., 1510.

ISABEL, dau. of George Hurst, of Loynton. Living 1514.

ROGER THORNCROFT, of Thorncroft, gent. Living 1577. Bur. at Gawsworth, 30 Oct., 1600.

JANE, dau. of William Ford, of the Marsh, co. Stafford. Living 1577. Bur. at G., 3 April, 1591.

Robert Thorncroft and Elizabeth, his wife. Living 1577.

MARGERY, dau. of Thomas Swetenham, of Swetenham, Esq. ? Bur. at Marlon, 15 March, 1640.

Anne T. Marr. to William Morrey, of Woodhouse, co. Stafford.

Isabel T. Marr. to Ralph Langton, of Whitley, co. Chester.

Mary T. Marr. to Mary T. Marr. to Ralph Goodman, of Gayton, co. Chester.

2. William Thorncroft. Lived at Blakelowe, near Maclesfield. Bur. at Macc., 11 Aug., 1652.

Anne, illeg. dau. of Reginald Downes, and wid. of John Downes, of Overton, co. Chester. Bur. at Macc., Feb. 10, 1664-5.

3. Thomas T. 4. John T. 5. Samuel T. Bap. at G. Died S.P.

Sara Thorncroft Bap. at G., 15 Feb., 1589-90. Marr. at Presbury, 26 June, 1612, to John Downes, of Overton, co. Chester, junior. She was living a widow in 1623.

Mary Thorncroft. Bap. at G., 20 Feb., 1587-88. Marr. Symon Gill, School-master of St. Paul's, London, before 1613.

Margaret T. Bap. at G., 1 Aug., 1591. Marr. to John Smith, of Barthomley, co. Chester.

William Thorncroft. Bap. at Taxal, 21 May, 1615. Marr. at Macc., 6 July, 1635, to Anne, dau. of Dr. Smith, of Chapel-in-the-Frith, co. Derby. Bur. at Macc., 11 March, 1673-4.

John Thorncroft.

Edward Thorncroft.

Samuel Thorncroft.

Mary T. Marr. to Hugh Byron

Anne T. Marr. to .. . Hyde, of Presbury.

