

The Thurman Family

A Sad Story

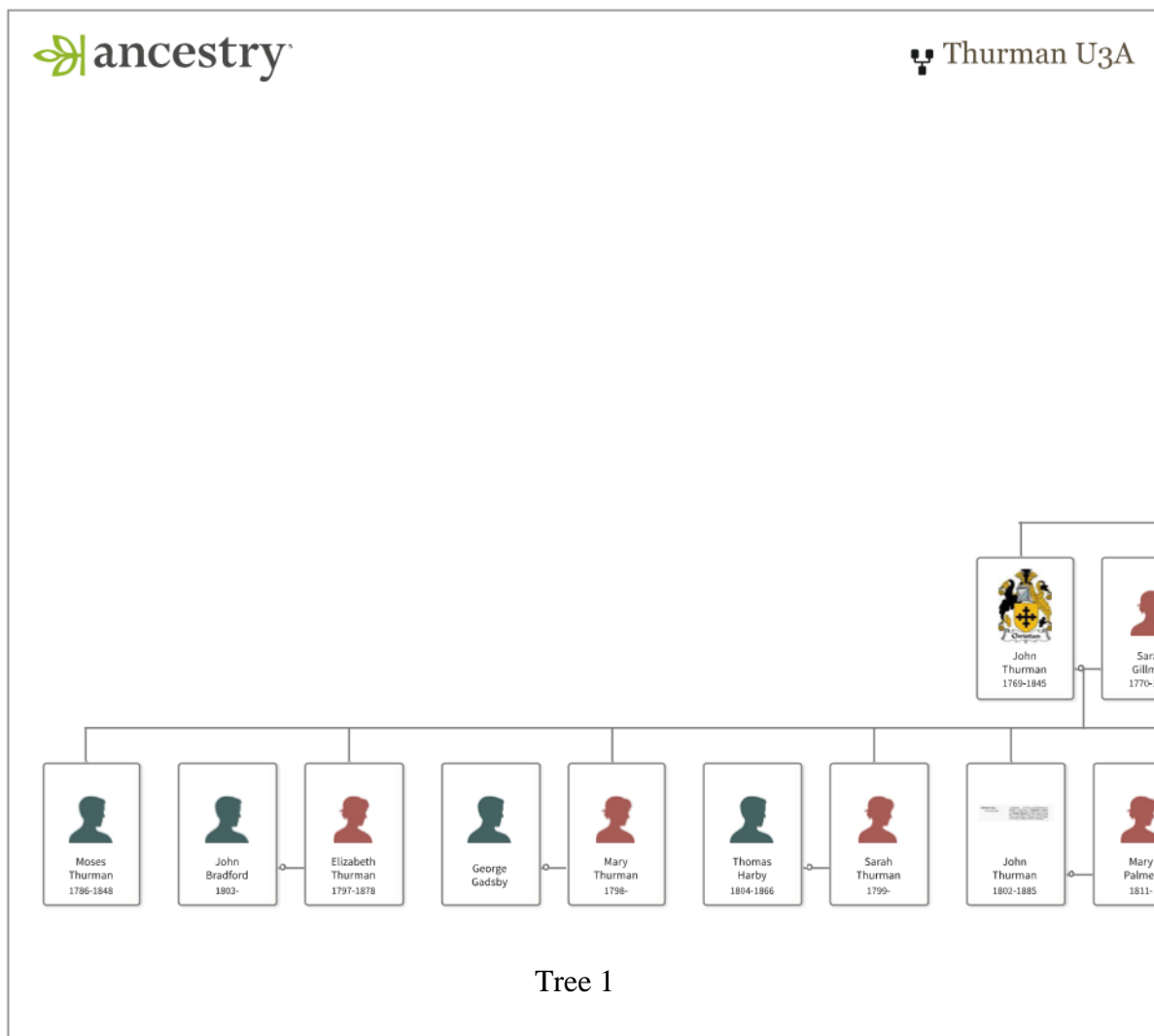
There have been Thurmans in and around Cotgrave for many decades, possibly for centuries, but they may have achieved lasting notoriety as a result of one specific (and seriously significant!) incident. In August 1829 one Thomas Thurman (the younger – aged 34) was convicted at Nottingham Assizes Court of the theft of a calf from his father, Thomas Thurman (the elder), the penalty for which was nothing less than hanging! The officiating Judge Lord Chief Justice Tenterden remarked on the unusual nature of the case and recommended ‘Mercy’ but the official judgement was, nevertheless, ‘Death’. ‘Mercy’ was, in fact, granted but this simply implied a punishment of transportation to Australia for life and Thomas was duly shipped aboard the convict ship ‘Mermaid’, arriving in Sydney on the 7th of May 1830. He was never to return home again and, indeed, died in Australia (near present day Canberra) on the 3rd of June 1862 at the age of sixty-six.

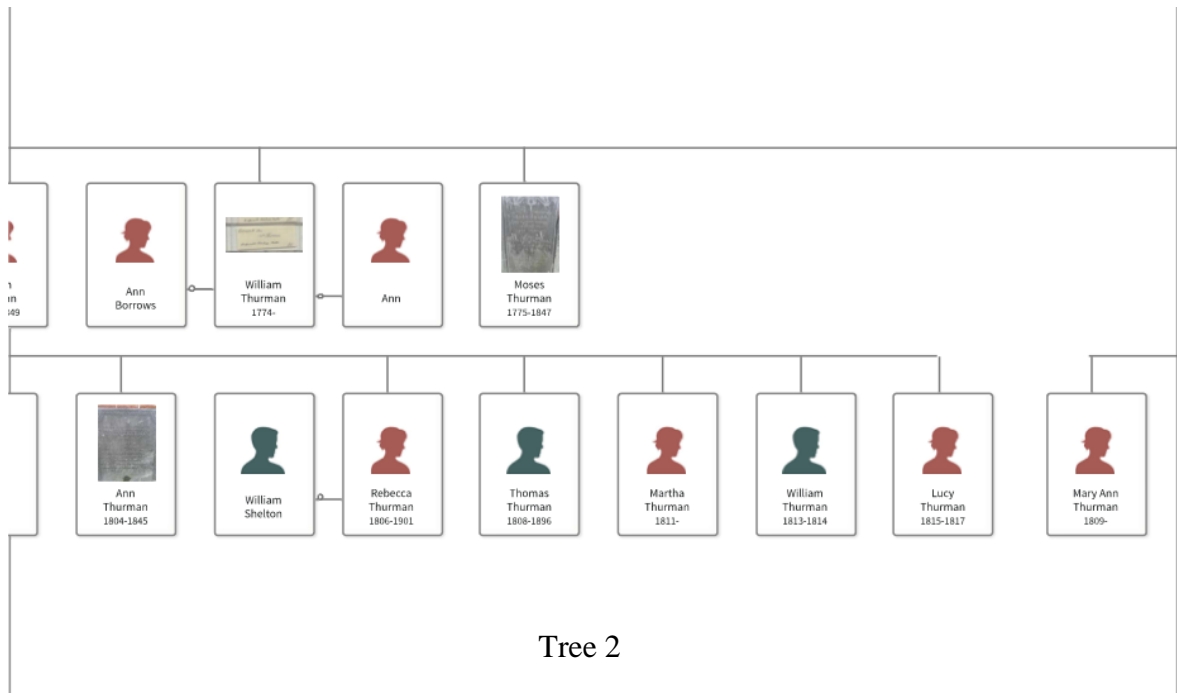
Thomas the elder was a farmer in Tollerton. He rented a modest acreage from the local Landlord, Pendock Neale (also known as Pendock Barry!). On 30th April 1793 he married a Cotgrave girl, Mary Brierly and they had their first child, William on 10th July of that year. William was presumably to inherit the farm, which meant that the second son, Thomas was obliged to look elsewhere in order to make his living. In fact, he found employment as a farm labourer in Plumtree but he obviously found life difficult (following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, labour was plentiful and wages correspondingly low). As a consequence, he apparently pestered his father to help him financially but succeeded only in annoying the old man. On the day in question, he had slept overnight at his father’s house in Tollerton, then begged him to help by giving his son a calf from his herd. This the old man refused to do, going back to bed in disgust at his son’s pestering but, when he later rose, he discovered that the calf was missing. Enrolling the assistance of the local Constable, he chased after young Thomas and caught him before he could reach Plumtree and took the calf back to Tollerton.

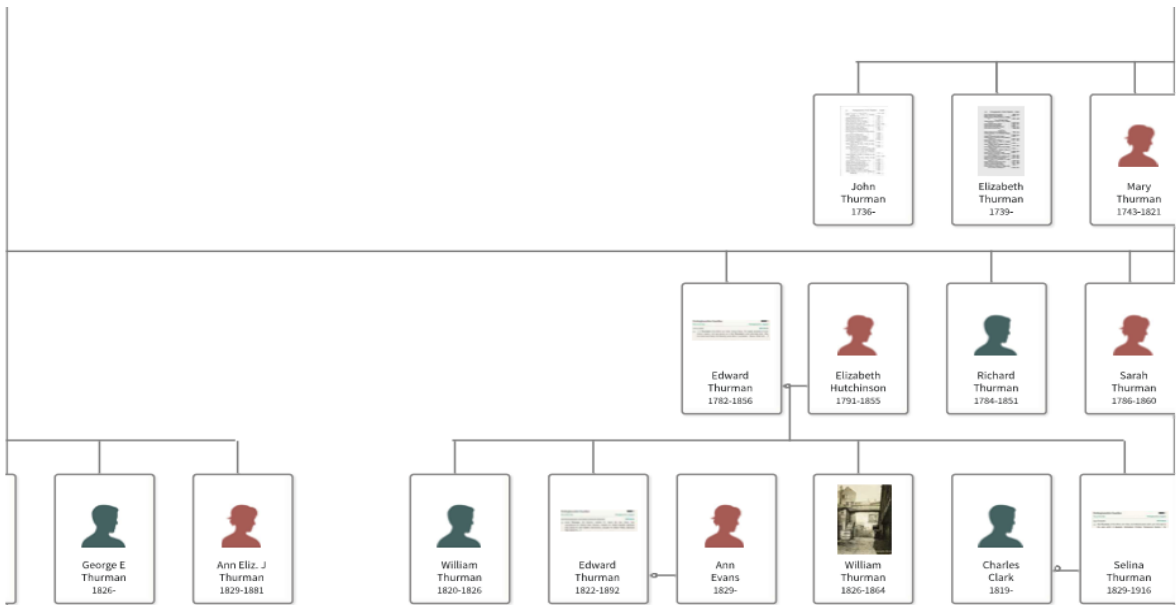
Knowing, as he must have done, that a charge of theft carried with it the death sentence, we must presume that he had no intention of pursuing the case in the Assize Court but it would appear that the above-mentioned Pendock Barry, Lord of the Roclaveston Manor, who was also a local Magistrate, harboured a grudge against Thomas’ brother William, a local carpenter and decided to take it out on Thomas by insisting that the case went to court in spite of Thomas’ protestations. This interpretation of events is borne out by the evidence of a long letter (a copy of which has survived) that Thomas (the younger) wrote to his father from his Australian hideaway in 1832. This shows considerable affection and gives no hint at all that young Thomas held any grudge against his father, while there is other evidence that Pendock Barry was far from stable in character.

The Thurman Family Tree

There is clear evidence that various branches of the Thurman family inhabited Cotgrave, Edwalton, Plumtree and Tollerton, to name only four localities, so it will not surprise the reader to learn that their family tree extends over many branches. Penny Florey of the Cotgrave U3A Genealogy Group has devoted considerable time and effort to tracing out these links from the beginning of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries, spanning five generations and we very much appreciate her making the results of her work available to the Cotgrave History Website. This is published here in the form of five files. We shall proceed to comment on a few of the individuals concerned in what follows, concentrating on the Cotgrave members of the clan.







Tree 4



Tree 5

The Cotgrave Thurmans

While the above ‘map’ of the Thurman family tree is constructed from information available from the Ancestry website, we can extend it to later years using, in addition, data provided by Census returns. These begin in 1841 and are repeated each decade until 1921, though there is then a gap until the special ‘Wartime’ Census of 1939, followed by the details of the Manvers sale of 1941/2 at which Earl Manvers divested himself of all his Cotgrave properties. It is convenient, then to begin with the 1818 Marriage between William Thurman (1793 – 1871) and Rachael Voce (1787 – 1877), one of sixteen children!. (This can be found on the fourth file of Penny’s family tree.) They were both born in Cotgrave but William’s family moved to Tollerton when he was still a child and Rachael therefore moved to Tollerton at the time of their marriage. They had six children though only one son, Thomas, born 1819. In the early 1840s, following a long dispute with the Squire over land, William was forced out of Tollerton and set up his joinery business in Edwalton, where they obviously lived in some degree of luxury until their deaths in the 1870s. As we shall see later, the relationship between the Thurman and Voce families is significant in relation to the story of Methodism in Cotgrave.

Interestingly, the name Thurman does not appear at all in the 1841 Cotgrave Census, though an 1844 Trade Directory for Cotgrave refers to two Thurmans, William and Thomas, both joiners. It may well be that these two Thurmans were father William and son Thomas who had a workshop in Cotgrave while actually living in Tollerton. William was born in Cotgrave but moved to Tollerton as a child, while, conversely, Thomas was born in Tollerton but moved to Cotgrave (probably in 1846, at the time of his marriage to a Cotgrave girl, Mary Hickling, daughter of Thomas Hickling, miller and publican). Furthermore, in the 1851 Census for Edwalton this same William is described as a ‘Master Carpenter’, having two young apprentices, so his carpentry business was obviously one of some significance. They continued to live in Edwalton until William’s death in 1871. Thomas Thurman, on the other hand, though born in Tollerton, continued to run a carpentry business in Chapel Yard, Cotgrave which was also of some importance, judging by the fact that in the 1861 Census he and his wife, Mary, enjoyed the services of three servants. It also records the fact that Thomas employed two men and two boys. His further commercial success is illustrated by his expansion into building in 1881 and into farming in 1891. In 1896/7 Thomas also had a seat on the Cotgrave Village Council – he was, by all accounts, an important member of the Cotgrave community. He died in 1899, having moved to a house in Candleby Lane.

Thomas and Mary had nine children (though one son, James, died aged seven). Not surprisingly, the two elder boys, William and George followed in their father’s footsteps, being listed as ‘Joiners’ in the 1871 Cotgrave Census. Similarly, a younger son, Charles, is also listed as ‘Joiner’ in the 1881 Census, while the youngest son Frederick is described as ‘Joiner, Builder, Farmer’ in the 1891 Census. In the 1901 Census only Charles remains in the Cotgrave home (now in Pepper Street, behind All Saints Church) and refers to himself as ‘Farmer’. He was presumably renting Church Farm from Earl Manvers and we understand that he devoted much time and money to improving the land with large quantities of ‘night soil’ brought from Nottingham by canal boat! In 1894 he, in turn married Mary Pollie Frith, who came from Antrobus in Cheshire and they had five children, one of whom, Thomas Henry, continued as a broadly based farmer. But, firstly, we should note that his father, Charles followed in *his* father’s footsteps in being a central figure in Cotgrave life, as well illustrated by the following extract from ‘Who’s Who in Nottingham’

* THURMAN, CHARLES, J.P. Farmer. Cotgrave, Nottingham.

Born 1861, Cotgrave. Son of Thomas Thurman.

Educated Cotgrave C.E.S. and Ratcliffe-on-Trent Private School.

Married 1894, Mary, daughter of the late John Frith, Old Pale Farm, Delamere, Chester.

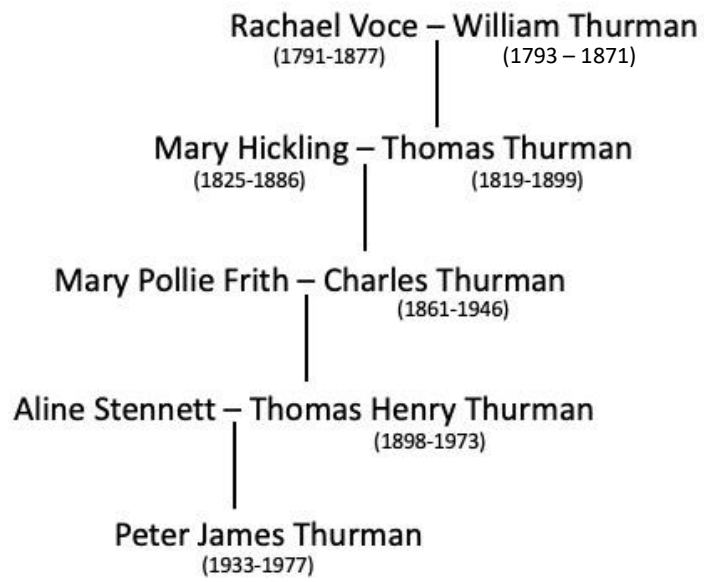
Foundation Manager, C.-of-E. School since 1902; Chairman of Parish Council for some years past; Trustee of Parish Hall and Institute; Lay Preacher, United Methodist Church since 1882; Trustee and Treasurer of U.M. Church; Cotgrave Representative to United Methodist Conference, 1914 to 1930; Farming during the Great War, producing food intensively; Treasurer for the War Memorial Fund.

Heir—Thomas Henry Thurman. Born 1898.

It is worth noting that when Charles retired in the 1930s he moved to a house in Candleby Lane which was designed by his brother John, a progressive amateur architect. The house still stands, at the end of a short drive.

Moving on to Thomas Henry Thurman, we note that he was renting Church Farm (130 acres) at the time of the Manvers sale in 1941/2, though after the sale he moved with his family to another farm in Bourn, Cambridgeshire. He stayed there until 1959, when he retired to Melton Mowbray, where he died in 1973. Thomas Henry was married twice, in 1930 to May Ninnis from Cornwall and, following her death in 1936, to Aline Stennett in 1939. He had three children with May (Kathleen 1931, Peter James 1933, David 1934) and one more with Aline (John 1940). In 1939 Thomas Henry and Aline were living at No 1 Pepper Street with three servants. There is no sign of any children but we understand this was for purely technical reasons – in fact, the three then alive were all there. What we know with certainty is that Peter James, former motor mechanic, died in 1977, David, former Estate Agent died in 2019, Kathleen, former music teacher, died in 2020 while, in 2023 (as we write) John, a research chemist, is living in Norwich.

As a highly condensed summary of this period, we add the following selective family tree which omits the majority of Thurman children born to the various couples – regrettably, leaving out all the daughters! Our only excuse is that to include them would make the overall picture incomprehensibly complex! Hopefully, it serves as a guide to the *mainline* Thurman citizens of Cotgrave. Due to the development of photography during the Victorian era, we are also able to add one or two relevant photographs.



Thomas Thurman

1819 - 1899



Charles and Mary Thurman

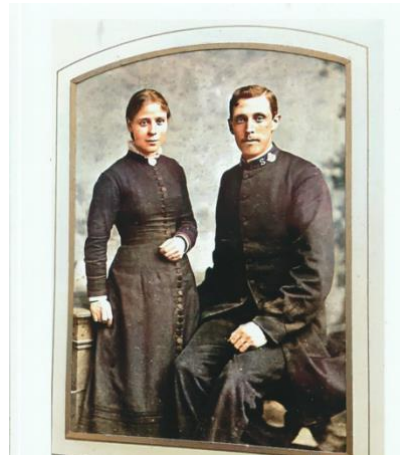
1861 - 1899

Charles Thurman has a brother, Henry and a sister, Mary both born in Cotgrave. Mary was born in 1848 and married William Hardy, they are living in Cotgrave with their children on the 1881 census.

Henry Thurman was born in 1859 and became a Colonel in the Salvation Army. He was responsible for setting up missions in Australia, Argentina and South Africa during the 1880's and 90's. Henry died in Port Elizabeth, South Africa in 1898.



Mary Hardy nee Thurman



Mary and Charles Thurman

Thurmans and Methodism

For a more detailed account of Methodism in Cotgrave the reader is referred to our article under that title in the 'Places' heading but it is appropriate to include a brief summary here due to the important role played by the Thurman family in the 1850s. Methodism came to Cotgrave in the early 1800s and grew rapidly until affected by segregation into several factions. In Cotgrave, this took the form of a split between the established church situated in Chapel Yard and a branch of 'Primitive Methodism' fostered by Thomas Thurman and Samuel Voce, a Cotgrave framework knitter. Geographically speaking, the initial split was tiny – the newly established services being held in Thomas' workshop, also in Chapel Yard. However, Thomas was far from satisfied with such a primitive arrangement and took it upon himself to build an alternative chapel just behind All Saints Church. This was opened for services in 1852 and is often referred to as 'Thurman's Chapel'. It served its purpose for many years, indeed until the reconciliation between the various strands of Methodism in the 1930s. It was then sold off and, for a time served as All Saints Church Hall.

Methodism featured considerably in the lives of the Thurman family but we shall merely note that Thomas Henry Thurman had a brother Philip who was a Methodist Minister, though he officiated mainly in the north of England (and a little in Cornwall). He subsequently died in Colchester.

Penny Florey

Paul Childs

John Orton

2023

We are much indebted to John Thurman and Peter Rogers for many helpful comments.