The Thorns of Ipswich

George & Jane

a pioneering family

who arrived in

Limestone in 1839
Acknowledgements

What is written here about George Thorn Snr has been researched from various publications and found in various official records. Some of the information has been handed down through the generations of the family. If mistakes or anomalies are found, I would really appreciate contact by email to raymarn2@gmail.com. This is version 2 of the book because it contains additional information from Thorn descendants who contacted me after publication of version 1 on the internet. Together we will get it right – thank you so much.

Unfortunately, I cannot acknowledge all of the sources of information because I just don’t know exactly from where they came. However, it was extremely helpful that they existed because it then became possible to paint a picture of this amazing man, his wife and his family. Indeed, this publication relied heavily on these sources of information, and I wish to express my sincere and heartfelt appreciation to:

- Marjorie Connolly (nee Thorn) (1913-2006) – my mother - great-granddaughter of George and Jane (line of descent through John, son of Henry, son of George Snr)
- Richard Thorn, great-great-grandson of George and Jane (line of descent through St.George Thorn, son of George Jnr, son of George and Jane)
- Julie Smith (line of descent through Elizabeth Harvey, sister of Jane Thorn (nee Handcock)
- The Queensland Times – newspaper clippings
- Trove (digitized newspapers) sourced through the National Library of Australia
- The Ipswich City Council – various publications and the authors thereof
- The Ipswich Library and staff
- The Ipswich Historical Society Inc.

A special word of appreciation must go to Richard Thorn (great-grandson of George Thorn Jnr) who has been researching the life of George Thorn Snr and who generously handed over some of the results of his research (which is ongoing). Rick is in the process of preparing a full biography of George Thorn Snr. If anyone has any information which might be helpful to Rick’s research, he would appreciate contact at his email address - stgeorgerd@hotmail.com.

The internet is a wealth of information but unfortunately, is not always 100% correct. One example is the entry from the Australian Dictionary of Biography about George Thorn Snr which included incorrect information about George Thorn Jnr. Facts relating to George Thorn Jnr and his younger brother, George Henry Thorn (always known as Henry) were merged. For example, in the internet entry, George Thorn Jnr was given Henry’s name (George Henry) as well as his birth and death dates. After I contacted the source in Canberra and submitted the required proof, there is now an addendum to that entry.

This publication has two parts – Part 1 being George’s story and Part 2 belongs to Jane.

About me:

I am the great-great-granddaughter of George Thorn Snr and Jane Thorn (nee Handcock). My great-grandfather was Henry Thorn, their second son. I feel privileged to have these amazing ancestors.

I dedicate this book to the memory of my mother, Marjorie Elizabeth Connolly (nee Thorn) who inspired me in so many ways.

Margaret Nicol
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George Thorn Snr.

(1806 - 1876)

It is believed that this is the only photograph in existence of George Thorn Snr.

It is taken from the official photograph of the first Queensland Parliament which hangs in Old Parliament House in Brisbane.
This is George’s story:

Early life in England

It was on the 11th of April, 1806, in Stockbridge, Hampshire, England, that twenty-nine-year-old Simon and twenty-two-year-old Elizabeth Thorn (nee Banting) welcomed their third son. They named him George.

Already living in their humble abode were two older brothers for George - Richard and two-year-old Charles. Two years later, in 1808, a sister, Sarah was born. So now there were four young children. The family lived simply in a home filled with love. In 1810, there was another baby and they named him James. Their joy was short-lived because tragedy struck three weeks after James was born when he died. The family struggled to come to terms with their grief over baby James but sadly, a few months later, Charles aged six, died.

Simon and Elizabeth lived a simple life with their remaining children, Richard, George and Sarah.

Simon worked as an agricultural labourer and there was very little money in the family. He would not have had much time to help Elizabeth look after their children.

In 1817, when George was only eleven, the family was devastated when his mother Elizabeth (aged thirty-three) died. It is hard to imagine how the family fared in those hard times, with very little money and the heart of the family gone.

However, life went on and nine years later, in 1826, at the age of nineteen, George made a life changing decision and joined the army. Within months he was a private in the 4th (King’s Own) Regiment bound across the seas for Portugal, a country on the verge of civil war. Fortunately, diplomacy prevailed and the regiment returned to Britain eighteen months later.

Between 1828 and 1832, George did home service which included a police role in the civil and political disturbances in Scotland, Ireland and England. In 1832, everything changed again for George when his regiment was sent to Australia. He said goodbye to his father, two brothers and sister, not knowing if he would ever see them again.

George was an accomplished soldier, his rank going from private to sergeant in six years.
Australia bound

Sergeant Thorn boarded the transport ship *Lord William Bentinck* bound for Hobart Town (Sullivan’s Cove on the western side of the Derwent). On the ship were 186 convicts serving an average sentence of eight years. Fifty-one of these convicts had life sentences.

The ship took a direct route across the Atlantic Ocean towards South America and then east along the high south latitudes to Tasmania.Whilst at sea George visited the Surgeon Superintendent with chilblains due to the cold and wet conditions. The voyage took three months.

After serving in Hobart, George was sent to the most notorious convict settlement - Norfolk Island, but returned to Sydney as a witness in a Court Martial hearing.

In 1834, George had a short stint in hospital followed by a transfer to Emu Plains (near Penrith). He was promoted to Colour Sergeant and went to the Blue Mountains for two years to the Seventeen Mile Pinch (Seventeen Mile Hollow) where the convict gang built roads and bridges across the Blue Mountains.

He returned to Tasmania in 1836 where he had short periods of service at Hobart Town & Port Phillip.

In June 1837, the regiment transferred to India. This was when George purchased his discharge for 15 pounds (£15). Almost immediately, he was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Horses with the New South Wales Colonial Government in Sydney.
George meets Jane.

How or when Jane met George is unknown. It was late 1836 when Jane arrived in Sydney and she and George married late in 1837, so it was a short courtship.

After winning the heart of Jane Handcock, George married Jane in Sydney on the 2nd of November, 1837.

George was aged thirty-two and Jane was about eighteen.

George has been described as being cheery and handsome, intelligent and capable. Jane has been described as a lovely-looking lady, literate and well-spoken. Some reports state that they eloped prior to their marriage ceremony.

The wedding took place at St Andrew's Scots Church Sydney.

This is a copy of George and Jane’s marriage certificate for their marriage. The Rev John McGarvie, of St Andrews Scots Church, Sydney was the officiating minister. Jane’s older sister Bridget was a witness.
Jane Handcock was aged about seventeen when she travelled to Australia from Ireland in 1836 with her father Robert and eight siblings, following the death of her mother, Anne.

The loss of their mothers was something which sadly both George and Jane had in common, the difference being that Jane had the rest of her family with her in Sydney, but George had left his family behind in England.

The Handcock family came aboard the Ship SS Duchess of Northumberland from Cork as bounty immigrants. Jane and some of the older sisters secured free passages as part of 263 single female bounty emigrants on the ship. Jane’s father, brother and younger sisters paid for their passages.

When they arrived in Sydney after a dreadful journey of almost five months, Jane secured employment as a housemaid.

After their marriage late in 1837, the newlyweds continued to live in Sydney where their first child, George Jnr was born almost a year later on the 12th of October, 1838.

The young family lived in Sydney and George continued working with the New South Wales Colonial Government as Superintendent of Horses. Jane’s father and siblings were also living in Sydney.

This is the only photograph available of Jane. In this photograph, Jane is an older woman. It was in a publication called Some Queenslanders of Bygone Days and was in a supplement to The Queenslander Jubilee Issue 1909.
Why did the Thorns come to Limestone?

The process started on the 5th of July, 1839, when George accepted an appointment as Overseer of Government Herds at Moreton Bay on a salary of £60 per annum. Some books state that his salary was £200 but that seems like a lot of money for the time. The Colonial Government Blue Books indicate he was paid £90 per annum in Sydney and £60 per annum when he went to Moreton Bay. It is possible that he may have been able to supplement his income whilst he was working as an overseer because he may have been given permission by the government to open a store and accommodation house.

In 1839, the convict era at Limestone Station, Moreton Bay, officially ended and George Thorn accepted the post of superintendent of the small settlement which ran cattle and sheep.

George and Jane, with their infant son, George Jnr, were rowed in a flat-bottomed boat up the Bremer River and became the first white family to settle in Limestone (as it was then called). Jane was the first free white woman in Ipswich. It would have been an exciting time for the young family.

Some of the convicts remained and helped work the Station. Crops were grown at nearby Ploughed Station (later known as The Grange and The Racecourse) which was also under George’s superintendence. The area ran beside the Bundamba Creek and the ground was very fertile. This area is now known as Cascade Street, Raceview Street and Robinson Road.

It has been reported that George was fair minded with the aborigines in the district which allowed a reasonably harmonious relationship as far as he was concerned in spite of the fact that there were serious outbreaks of violence between the white people and the aborigines in the area from time to time.

Jane had complete faith in her husband’s ability to protect her. She certainly had an interesting and different life to what she had in Sydney.
The Thorn family

The Thorns had seven sons, and three daughters, with one son dying in infancy. Information about their children commences on the page after next.

The Thorns were an extremely happy couple and were proud of all of their children.

Four of their six sons served in the Queensland Parliament, following their father who served in the first Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

![Images of George, Henry, John, and William Thorn]

In 1850, Jane and George suffered the heartache of the death of one male infant.

The rest of the family all survived until adulthood but after the death of George in 1876, Jane grieved for two of her adult sons, Charles and Henry. In fact, the loss of Jane’s husband George and her two adult sons (both in their 30s) happened in the last seven years of her life.

The Thorns had fine up-standing handsome sons, but it was the three Thorn daughters who were renowned for their beauty. Whenever they walked up town or attended social occasions, people would stop and stare at them. They were also intelligent and ladies in the true sense of the word.

![Images of Jane, Sarah, and Ida Thorn]
Educating the Thorn children

It is not known where all of the children went to school.

George Jnr went to The King’s School, Parramatta.

He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Sydney.

The mystery of where Henry Thorn received his education has not yet been solved.

John Thorn was one of the first students of the Ipswich Grammar School.

Because George Thorn was an enthusiastic supporter for the establishment of the National School in Ipswich, it is likely that some of his younger children attended that school when it was opened in 1861.

According to the tribute for Jane Harris (nee Thorn) in The Brisbane Courier on the 17th of March, 1917, the majority of the daughters of the station owners and professional men of that time were sent to school in Sydney. Jane’s father and two of her sisters lived in Sydney. There is a possibility that the Thorn girls went to Sydney but this cannot be established as fact.
George Thorn Jnr (B.A.)

was born on the 12\textsuperscript{th} of October, \textbf{1838} in Sydney.

George was educated at \textit{The King’s School}, Parramatta (1851-55), and graduated from Sydney University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1858.

On the 14\textsuperscript{th} of February, 1878, George married Celia Uniacke in Ellengowan, Queensland.

They had two sons:

- \textit{Richard} \hspace{1cm} (1879-1883)
- \textit{St George} \hspace{1cm} (1880-????)

In 1959, George accompanied his father and mother on a tour to the old country, visiting also the Continent and the Holy Land. Upon his return he worked for some years in pastoral pursuits on his father’s stations.

From 1867–1873 George represented West Moreton in the Queensland Parliament, and after that he represented Fassifern. In 1874 he became Postmaster General, and then Premier from 1876 to 1877. He resigned from Parliament in 1878, but returned in 1879 as a member for Northern Downs until 1883. Some years later, he was elected as the member for Fassifern where he served until 1902.

George died in Ipswich on the 15\textsuperscript{th} of January \textbf{1905} at the age of sixty-six. He is buried in the Ipswich General Cemetery, close to the Thorn family plot. His grave is number twelve in the Ipswich City Council Cemetery Trail. His son Richard (aged four) is buried in the same plot.
Henry Thorn

was born on the 6th of November, 1840.

His baptism certificate states that he was named George Henry Thorn, but he was always known as Henry. This has caused a problem because in some historical books and internet information, Henry’s biographical information has been merged with George Jnr.

Henry was the first white child to be born to free white settlers in Limestone (later Ipswich). It is not clear where Henry was born. He was baptized in Brisbane Town on the 15th November, 1840, nine days after he was born, so he was probably born in Brisbane.

On the 11th of April, 1862, at the age of twenty-one, Henry married Rebecca Willis in a grand ceremony at St Paul’s Anglican Church in Ipswich, with the Reverend Moseley (Rebecca’s brother-in-law) officiating.

Henry and Rebecca had seven sons and five daughters.

- **George Henry** (1863-1929)
- **Jane** (1864-1949)
- **John Albert** (1865-1942)
- **Robert Somerset** (1867-1927)
- **Alfred William** (1869-1928)
- **Rebecca** (1870-1957)
- **Charlotte** (1871-1958)
- **Sarah Elizabeth** (1873-1959)
- **Stanley** (1874-1946)
- **Alice Sybil** (1876-1964)
- **Alexander** (1877-1877)
- **Charles** (1877-1951)

Henry managed his father’s properties - **Normanby**, Warrill View, and for many years (until 1878) the **Warra Warra Station**, Warra, near Dalby. Henry represented Northern Downs in the Queensland Parliament in 1867 to 1868 and from 1873 to 1876, when he resigned because of a conflict of business interests. He was the youngest member in Parliament in his time and the first Queensland-born member.

Henry died in 1880, aged thirty-nine. He left a widow with many children, some of them quite young. He is buried in the Ipswich General Cemetery in the Thorn family plot.
Jane Thorn

was born about December 1842.

She married George Harris (member of Legislative Council in the first Queensland Parliament and also a wealthy merchant) on the 13th of October, 1860, in St Paul’s Anglican Church, Ipswich, the year after it was established.

This was the first of George and Jane’s children to be married, and the first of many to be married in that church.

The family lived in Newstead House in Brisbane for about twenty-seven years.

They had two sons and three daughters:

- Kate May (1862-1862)
- George Edmund (1863-1913)
- John Ernest (1864-1911)
- Edith Maud (1865-1925)
- Jane Evelyn (1867-1943)

Jane died in 1917 at the age of seventy-five. She is buried in the Brisbane Cemetery at Toowong.

One of their daughters, Evelyn, was the mother of Richard Casey, whose career included being a federal member of parliament in Australia, a member of Winston Churchill’s war cabinet, Governor of Calcutta, and finally, Governor-General of Australia.

Another daughter, Edith, married George Condamine Taylor, then Charles Lumley-Hill and lived at Bellevue Homestead, near Esk.
Charles Thorn

was born in 1844.

He married Frances Mary Smith
on the 28th of February 1867.

They had two sons and three daughters:

- Frances Mabel (1868-???)
- Ronald Charles (1869-1946)
- Maud Isabel (1871-???)
- Ida Victoria (1872-???)
- Ernest Evelyn (1875-1876)

Charles and his brother John managed Normanby Station, Warrill View, for their father.

Tragically, Charles died in 1877, at the age of thirty-two. He left a widow with four young children.

His obituary states that he caught a very severe cold when he went to Toowoomba for the purpose of being present at the Royal Agricultural Society’s show. This cold settled upon his lungs and eventually killed him. It completely baffled all the medical aid and skill which tried to save his life – even the skills of his father-in-law, Dr Gunn, could not save him.

He is buried in the Ipswich General Cemetery in the Thorn family plot.
John Thorn

was born on the 23rd of November, 1847, in Limestone.

He married Augusta Louisa Marsh in 1875.

They had five sons and two daughters:

- George Ernest  (1876-????)
- Percival John  (1877-????)
- Sydney Augustus (1879-????)
- Stuart Aubrey  (1881-1955)
- Evelyn Irene   (1883-????)
- Claude Condamine (1886-????)
- Vera Muriel    (1892-????)

He was educated at the Ipswich Boys' Grammar School, on leaving which institution he joined his brother, Henry Thorn, on Warra Warra Station. He remained there for some two or three years. Then he came on to Normanby Station, Warrill View near Harrisville, where, along with his brother Charles, he managed for some time for his father, until his father's death.

On leaving Normanby, he resided at Woodend Pocket for some years. Subsequently Mr. Thorn engaged in railway contracting as senior partner of the firm of Messrs. J. T. Annear and Co., in the Maryborough district, during which time be lived in Maryborough. After leaving Maryborough, the family resided in Brisbane.

From 1874 to 1878, John was the member for Fassifern.

John Thorn died on the 30th of April, 1896 at the age of forty-eight.

John's obituary states that he died in the Brisbane Hospital with dropsy and heart disease, having recently been removed to that institution for special treatment on the advice of the medical men previously attending him. However, his granddaughter, Audrey Thorn, has stated that John had a heart attack when he ran to the wharf after being told incorrectly that the ferry containing his four sons had gone down with no survivors. The boys were not on the ferry.

He is buried in the Brisbane Cemetery at Toowong.
Joseph Arthur Thorn

was born in 1850.

Joseph died in infancy.

William Thorn

was born in on the 3rd of September, 1852.

He married Georgina Ord on the 11th of October, 1876 at Nukinenda, near Toogoolawah.

They had six sons and five daughters:

- William Somerset (1877-1959)
- David Eric (1879-1930)
- Georgina Beatrice (1881-1957)
- Ida Jane (1883-1939)
- Albert Garnet (1884-1943)
- Elsie Evelyne (1886-1972)
- Edward Ord (1888-1889)
- George Claud (1890-1941)
- Arthur Henry (1891-1952)
- Dorothy May (1894-1925)
- Maud Victoria (1897-1943)

William was the member for Aubiginy for thirty years.

He was also mayor of Toowoomba.

He died in 1935, at the age of eighty-two, a grand age for a man of that era.

William is buried in the Toowoomba cemetery.
Sarah Elizabeth Thorn

was born in 1855.

in Limestone.

Sarah married Thomas Rome
of Northampton Downs, near Blackall,

at

St Paul’s Anglican Church of England in Ipswich, on the 15th of January, 1874.

Both Sarah and Thomas were nineteen years of age.

Their first child was born a year later in Queensland and the next three children were also born in Queensland but the fifth was born in England in 1883. The year they left Australia is not known but they settled in Cheltenham, England and there is no evidence of their return to Australia for a visit.

The Rome Trust in Australia held considerable house property in Sarah’s name.

The Romes had six children of their own:

- *Claude Stuart Rome* (1875-1951)
- *Adrian Scott Rome* (1876-1952)
- *Lorna* (1878-????)
- *Evelyn* (1880-????)
- *Hubert Charlton* (1883-1914)
- *Percy* (????-1889)

When Thomas’s brother Charles died in 1887, he and Sarah brought up Charles’s family as their own.
Albert Samuel Thorn

was born on the 24th of June 1857 in Limestone.

Albert went to the King’s School, Parramatta from 1872 to 1875.

Albert did not marry.

For most of his adult life-time, Albert was prominently connected with pastoral pursuits. Of later years he was best known as the proprietor of Nukinenda or Milford Rocks Station, near Esk.

He inherited the family home Claremont in his father’s will.

Albert was diagnosed with a mental condition and was subsequently admitted to Woogaroo Asylum at Goodna near Ipswich in 1894.

This was when he lost ownership of Claremont which passed to trustees of the Thorn family.

Albert passed away four years later, in December 1898 at the age of forty-one.

The family home remained with the Thorns until it was sold to the Wilson family in 1906.

Albert is buried in the Thorn family plot in the Ipswich General Cemetery.
Ida Australia Thorn
was born on the 15th of May 1859,
in England (when her parents returned there
for a visit).

She married Donald Smith Wallace
on the 16th of December, 1876 (the year her
father died) at the age of seventeen,
in St Paul’s Church of England, Ipswich.
Donald was thirty-two years of age.

Although all the Thorn girls were renowned
for their beauty, Ida is said to have been the
beauty of the family. Newspaper reports
said that Donald Wallace married the most
beautiful woman in the colony.

They had one son:

- John Vivian (1880-1932)

Donald Wallace was a member of the Queensland
Legislative Assembly from 1883 to 1888 as the
member for Clermont. It has been reported that
Donald Wallace did not spend much time in Clermont
or managing his various Queensland properties.

Donald Wallace was elected to the Parliament of Victoria from 1889 to 1894.
His family was from Bellark near Melbourne.

Donald Wallace owned racehorses, the most famous
was of all, Carbine, won most of his races, including
the Sydney Cup and the Melbourne Cup.
Unfortunately Ida did not live to see Carbine’s
amazing win in the Melbourne Cup of 1890 in
record time and carrying a record weight.

Tragically, Ida died in Melbourne on the
2nd of January, 1889 at the age of twenty-nine, when her son was only eight.

She is buried at Ballark, near Meredith, west of Melbourne, Victoria.
Where did the Thorns live?

When George, Jane and baby George arrived in Limestone, they lived in a brick cottage, thatched with straw, close to the Bremer River, and close to their last home, *Claremont*. It is believed that this cottage which had been built in 1829 was located on the eastern side of Thorn Street and adjoining the railway line. It had been occupied by soldiers who vacated it when the Thorn family arrived. It is believed that this cottage which overlooked the Bremer River had two rooms with fireplaces, a door and a window, probably without glass. A verandah ran around two sides. This cottage was subsequently swept away by floods.

The exact location of this first dwelling house in Ipswich has given rise to many discussions in modern times. Russell mentions in his history that the cottage "stood in a bight, formed by the junction of a deep gully, on the western aspect, with the Bremer, which flowed by it on the north, about a hundred yards away." Reliable authorities state that the site of the cottage was within a short distance of *Claremont*, in which the Thorns lived later for many years.

There is some thought that their home is the structure in the right of the above sketch by Conrad Martens. This cannot be verified in any way, but is worthy of some consideration.
But the floods came and swept away the Thorn cottage. Where did they go? How scary it would have been for the family. They had two sons, George and Henry and possibly Jane (born in 1842) so the family had to live somewhere.

Legend has it that as well as a couple of dogs, they had an emu and a kangaroo for pets because these animals followed George around. Now that would have been fun for the children.

It was in 1844 when they built the *Queens Arms* Hotel so it is possible (maybe even probable) that they lived for a time in rooms in that Hotel. This was also the year that Charles was born.

For the next fifteen years, the Thorn family lived happily, adding five more children to their family.

In 1859, the Thorn family returned to England for a visit. George’s father, Simon, was still living and it was time to visit his family. Simon died five years later at the age of eighty-seven.

Before leaving they arranged for their new residence to be built on land George had purchased on the south-west corner of Brisbane and East streets. It later became known as the *Palais Royal* Hotel corner.

The above photograph was taken in 1860 from Nicholas Street looking down Brisbane Street. The Thorn’s home is located about in the middle of the photograph.

It has been reported that it was there that Governor Bowen danced his first dance in Ipswich in 1859.
This illustration was done in 1885.

For five years, the Thorns lived in this beautiful home in the centre of Ipswich. It was from this home that their children, Jane (in 1860) and Henry (in 1862) were married – indeed they only had one block to walk to get to St Paul’s Anglican Church.

In 1863, the Thorn family purchased Clarendon, the stone house which was built by Mr Panton near the Railway line and overlooking the Bremer River. This home is Ipswich’s oldest building and stands today as a private residence. This was George’s last home because he died there some thirteen years later, in 1876, at the age of seventy.
Claremont was the scene of many balls and also the centre for many fox hunts and social activities.

One can easily imagine the grandeur of the balls with the men and women dressed in beautiful gowns and the men in formal attire.

The two main rooms would have been cleared of furniture. The French doors would have been opened to allow people to drift out onto the verandahs and for the air to circulate.

There would have been servants who would have taken care of the domestic requirements for these balls.

It was during this time that George and four of his sons, served in the Queensland Parliament.

Other weddings took place during the time the Thorn family lived at Claremont – these were for Charles (in 1867), Sarah (in 1874), John (in 1875), Ida and William (in 1876), and George Jnr (in 1878).
This photograph is of the garden at *Claremont*, so it is possible that the boy with the wooden wheelbarrow was one of the Thorn boys.

The Bremer River is in the background.

(JOL.NEG. NO. 89247)

The photograph below is of a fox hunt held by the Brisbane Hunt Club at *Claremont* on the 30th of August 1890 when Albert Thorn was the owner. It was reported in the *Brisbane Courier* on the 6th of September.

(JOL. NEG. NO. 16708)

After George's death, Jane continued to live in *Claremont* for a short time. Ownership of *Claremont* passed to George’s son, Albert, who lived there for another eighteen years, until he was diagnosed with insanity in 1894 and the property passed onto trustees of the Thorn family. *Claremont* remained in the Thorn family until 1906.
The Father of Ipswich.

George is often affectionately referred to as The Father of Ipswich. How did he earn that title and what does it mean? Perhaps it is because George's journey to prominence goes hand in hand with the growth of Ipswich, West Moreton and the Darling Downs region.

As Ipswich grew, George's energy and foresight made him wealthy and the family became an important one in Queensland. Apart from being the first white family to settle in Ipswich, perhaps George's life from 1843 onwards illustrates how this happened.

In 1843, George retired from being superintendent of the cattle establishment when the convict establishment was closed down.

Some records state that he became a vintner and established vineyards in Ipswich, although there is no proof of this happening.

In that year, George also purchased the first land in Ipswich - two allotments on the north-west corner of East and Brisbane Streets, on which he built the Queens Arms Hotel.

The Thorns then began a simple house of accommodation, where travellers could rest for the night.

George was proprietor of the Queens Arms Hotel (cnr Brisbane and East Streets) in 1846 when Dr John Dunmore Lang stayed at his hotel. George refused to give him an account for his stay.

This hotel had the first billiard table in Ipswich.

George advertised his hotel:

George Thorn of The Queens Arms, ‘begs to acquaint his many friends that he intends to keep the same description of establishment as heretofore and will deal with all travelers upon the same liberal principle. The best accommodation will be afforded at the shortest notice. Breakfast, dinners, suppers will be provided and every other refreshment in five minutes, together with wine, spirits and stabling, equal to any in the colony.

Ipswich, 23rd October, 1846
A year later, in 1847, George opened a wholesale and retail store, selling basic groceries and clothing. This was when they ventured into the commercial world. According to George Thorn’s obituary, he built and opened a store in East Street.

This photograph of East Street, Ipswich was taken in about the 1860s. It gives some idea of what it was like back then. Wonder if the Thorn’s store was one of the stores pictured above?

In 1850, George took on the positions of Secretary/Treasurer and Clerk of Course for the new racecourse.
George went on to accumulate more land, and at the time of his death, owned:

- Rosebrook (about 1845) (near Warrill View) - renamed Normanby
- Nukinenda (near Toogoolawah)
- Warra Warra at Warra (near Dalby). (acquired about 1860)

George Thorn’s sons, John, Henry and Charles had the experience of managing the Normanby property but Charles spent the most time there until his untimely death.

The homestead of Nukinenda is about 100 km west-northwest of Brisbane, about 20 km away from Blackbutt. This photo of the old homestead was taken in 1948. William Thorn managed this property for his father.

Henry managed *Warra Warra Station* near Dalby.

These three pastoral properties stations totalled 74,000 acres freehold and 130 square miles of leased runs. George also owned allotments in Toowoomba, Moggill and Cleveland.

At one time, George Thorn owned, in addition to the properties mentioned above:

- *Claremont* homestead
- two properties on the corner of East and Brisbane streets
- two general stores in Ipswich.

After George died in 1876 nearly all of his rental properties and vacant land was sold. It appears that an attempt was made to auction the grazing/ farm properties. They were not sold and the land was split up amongst the Thorn family.
George's plan to convince the Governor to make Ipswich the capital of Queensland.

During 1854, George was one of a group of agitators who devised a plan to hail the SS Tamar as it passed Cleveland, and seek an audience with the Queen's representative (NSW Governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy).

Their plan was to convince him that Ipswich deserved to be considered as capital of Queensland instead of Brisbane. They had hired a boat to take them down the Bremer and Brisbane rivers but it rained torrentially and they took a warming drink - or two - and slept soundly as the SS Tamar sailed passed them onto Brisbane town.
What other influence did George Thorn have on the town of Ipswich?

In 1856, George served as a member of the Ipswich Hospital committee. The committee asked His Excellency, the Governor, to grant the committee the rights to a piece of land it had selected and requested 2200 pounds for this. George Thorn headed a list of donors with a donation of £50 (fifty pounds). The Ipswich Hospital, the first public hospital in the state, opened in 1860.

George would have been proud of his descendants who continued to work for the hospital, with his great-granddaughter, Marjorie Thorn, being part of the inaugural Sunshine League set up to provide funds for the children’s hospital which opened in 1935.
Early in 1859, George and Jane, several of their children and a maid went to England for a visit. Baby Ida was born there in May and they all returned in late 1859, on the SS Malta.

This was the ship which also had on board the Governor-elect (Governor Bowen) and his beautiful wife, Diamantina, and party.

It was subsequently jokingly said that George had been sent to England to bring out the first governor of Queensland.

It was on the 6th of June 1859 that Queen Victoria approved the creation of a new colony to be called Queensland. On the 10th of December, Sir George Bowen arrived in Brisbane as the new colony’s Governor and officially proclaimed the Colony of Queensland. From December 1859 to April 1860, Queensland was governed by an interim Executive Council. Electoral rolls were prepared and the first election was held between April and May 1860 for twenty-six Members from the sixteen electorates established for the first Legislative Assembly.

From 1860 to 1861, George served in the new Queensland Parliament. He was elected as one of the three members for West Moreton in this first Parliament. The new Queensland Parliament met for the first time on the 22nd of May, 1860.

George resigned on the 3rd of April, 1861, resulting in a by-election won by Benjamin Cribb. The reason for George’s resignation is not known but it was about that time that he became involved in local politics and offered himself for election as an Ipswich City Council alderman. Ipswich was proclaimed a city on the 2nd of March, 1860, and it was an exciting time for the early pioneering families.
This is a photo of the First Queensland Parliament. George Thorn (36) is on the second bottom row, second from the left. His future son-in-law George Harris (14) is on the third row, second from right.
In 1861, George was one of the first trustees of the School of Arts.

In this photo, it is the building on the right of the page.

In later years it became known as the Town Hall.

From 1862 to 1865, George was elected and served as an Alderman on the Ipswich City Council.

He had offered himself for election in 1861, was unsuccessful, but was elected in 1862.

In 1863, The Ipswich Grammar School was established and George was one of the first trustees.

Joseph Allsopp wrote A Centenary History of the Ipswich Grammar School 1863-1963 and in Chapter 1 Beginnings gave a thorough and very interesting account of how it all began. His research revealed that it was not an easy beginning with religious sectarian disagreements almost stopping it before it began, and there were even physical arguments between the citizens of Ipswich who were very passionate about the school.
Finally, the elected Trustees were George Thorn, A Macalister and B Cribb and the Governor-in-General appointed John Panton, Frederick Forbes, Henry Challinor and Christopher Gorry. The school opened on the 7th of October, 1863, with eighteen students, John Thorn (son of George) being one of them.

In addition to the roles described above, George Thorn helped establish the Anglican Church which opened on the 12th of June 1859.

The church has this plaque on its interior wall.

George’s contribution towards the opening of this church included his enthusiasm and a substantial amount of money.
George was also influential in establishing the North Australian Club (South Street), the racing club, the Queensland Pastoral and Agricultural Society, the Ipswich railway,

and the Botanic Gardens.

Photos courtesy of Ipswich Historical Society Inc.
Death of George

Marginal Notes (if any)

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2 When died and where.
3 Name and surname, rank, or profession.
4 Sex and age.
5 (1) Cause of death.
   (2) Duration of last illness.
   (3) Medical attendant by whom certified.
   (4) When he last saw deceased.
6 Name and surname of father, with rank or profession.
   Name and maiden surname of mother.
7 Signature, description, and residence of informant.
Certified in writing by Charles Thorn, Son, Normandy
8 (1) Signature of Register.
   (2) Date.
   (3) Place of registration.
9 Burial or Cremation Registered
   (1) When and where buried or cremated.
   (2) By whom certified.
10 Name and religion of minister, and/or names of two witnesses to burial or cremation.
11 Where born and how long in Australian States, stating which.
12 Deceased was Married
   (1) Where.
   (2) At what age.
   (3) To whom.
13 Issue living, in order of birth, their names and ages.
   ✓ George
   ✓ Henry
   ✓ Jane
   ✓ Charles
   ✓ John
   ✓ William
   ✓ Sarah
   ✓ Albert
   ✓ Jde
   Deceased 1 Male

Wm. Hendren
16th May 1876
at IPSWICH
29th April 1876
I.W. Reed
Rev. W. Hosley, minister of the Church of
Wm. Hendren
Christ Church
Stockbridge, Hampshire, England
45 years

Sydney, New South Wales
32 years
Jane Hancock

 extracted on 22nd May, 1963

Lionel Albert Stevens, Deputy Registrar-General, do hereby certify that the above is a true copy of an entry in a Register of Deaths kept in the General Registry Office at Brisbane, and I further certify that I am a person duly authorised by law to issue such certificate.

End by

Deputy Registrar-General
George Thorn died on the 28th of April, 1876 at the age of seventy. The death certificate states that the cause of death was a fracture of the thigh bone and bed sore. It is not written anywhere why he broke his leg although it has been rumoured that he fell off his horse. His obituary states that he had a severe mishap on the 31st of December, 1875. It also says that his cause of death was severe bronchitis. The death certificate differs. It states that George’s mother’s name was Sarah, but it is firmly believed that her name was Elizabeth. The informant for the certificate was Charles Thorn, his son, who managed and lived at Normanby station. The officiating doctor was Dr Gunn who was the step-father of Charles’s wife.

At the time of George’s death, his eldest son, George Jnr was thirty-seven and his youngest child, Ida was seventeen. Jane was aged about fifty-seven when George died. George and Jane had about forty years together and what a wonderful, exciting time they enjoyed. Jane lived for another seven years after George died.

George rose from poverty in his country of birth to wealth and position in his new land of opportunity. At his date of death his estate was valued at £170,000. By today’s standards, he was indeed a millionaire.

But perhaps his real wealth was in his strength of character and his strong guidance in all matters of family and community. He was a grand man indeed. George had a reputation for 'larky humour', thoroughness and integrity.

H. Stuart Russell, (pastoralist, explorer and friend) read George’s epitaph and printed below is a section of it which was written by Russell whose opinion of George seems to sum up this fine old man, and the legacy he left all of us and his beloved Ipswich. It is quite an epitaph!

"George Thorn, ah, George Thorn, though you have left but your ashes in the soil under our feet, but your name, your humour, your thoroughness, and, above all, your integrity of heart, head, and hand, lie not there with them; they are not even shelved among past regrets, they are so often dwelt upon among the memories of those who afterwards knew you well, and, so knowing, esteemed and honoured you."
Perhaps it is fitting that the last words on George Thorn should be the Obituary published in the “Queensland Times” on the 18th May, 1876. It is reprinted in full below:

**OBITUARY OF GEORGE THORN**

It is with profound regret that we record the death, at half-past 5 o-clock in the morning of the 28th ultimo, of Mr George Thorn, Sen. A brief notice, in our previous issue, of the deceased gentleman’s serious and apparently hopeless condition was, alas! but too true a foreboding of the gradual loosening of the “silver cord”, and the swift departure from amongst us of the oldest and one of the most respected and highly-esteemd of the residents of Ipswich.

It has been our melancholy duty as public journalists to chronicle the decease, within the last two or three years, of several of our most useful and respected fellow townsmen – men we could ill spare, whose benevolence and philanthropy have, on many occasions, been recognized by an ever grateful public – and now again it has fallen to our sorrowful lot to tell of another of our esteemed public men who has passed forever away. Mr Thorn’s long uninterrupted residence amongst us, the deep interest he took in everything likely to advance our prosperity, and the universal respect in which he was held by all classes, gained for him the honourable and familiar title of “The Father of Ipswich” – a title deservedly earned, and an honour which, at the good old age of “three score years and ten” he has just left to be conferred upon another.

It will be remembered that on the last day of the year, the deceased gentleman unfortunately met with a severe mishap by which his thigh-bone was fractured, and ever since that period, he never thoroughly recovered his accustomed health.

Previous to this, Mr Thorn, although of course subject to the usual infirmities of advanced age, was in the enjoyment of wonderfully good health; but the long confinement consequent on the accident proved too great a strain on his already enfeebled constitution, and, despite the skill and attention of his medical attendants, he gradually succumbed, and, senile bronchitis having supervened, the inevitable messenger, Death, was soon able to claim another victim. Mr Thorn was quite sensible up to within a few hours of his decease, but shortly before the final scene he became unconscious, in which state he remained until the vital spark took its flight to that “bourn from whence no traveller returns”.
The career of Mr Thorn was one full of excitement and interest. He was born on the 11th April, 1806, near Stockbridge, Hants, England. He enlisted in the 4th King's Own Regiment, and after serving for some time in the Old Country and elsewhere, he emigrated, about forty-three years ago, to New South Wales, being at that time a non-commissioned officer in his regiment. He first settled in Sydney, and having renounced his calling as a soldier, he entered the Town Survey Department. Whilst following his new avocation, he formed the acquaintance of Sir Richard Bourke, the then Governor of the primitive and penal colony of New South Wales and was present with his Excellency when the first survey of what is now the largest and most important city of the Australian colonies – viz Melbourne. Mr Thorn was subsequently transferred from the Survey Department to that of the Commissariat, and whilst holding office in the latter he was, in 1838, transferred to Moreton Bay.

On arrival, he immediately took up his residence in Ipswich, having been placed in charge of all the Government stock – cattle, sheep and horses – then located in the surrounding neighbourhood.

He also had the supervision of a large area of land, under cultivation by the Government, at a place then designated as the “Ploughed Station”, but better known at the present time as “The Grange” and the racecourse.

Here were successfully cultivated large fields of wheat – the first ever grown in the colony – as well as the other productions of our modern farmer. With credit to himself and satisfaction to his superiors, Mr Thorn faithfully discharged the duties of his office; and it is certainly no small compliment to the deceased gentleman to be able to say that, during his whole career as Government Superintendent – when he has under him men whose wild and ungovernable temperaments rendered them often the subjects of discontentment and spleen – almost to a man, his subordinates held him in the highest esteem.

Mr Thorn continued to hold the office of Superintendent until the colony became a free settlement, when he retired. He was offered a grant of land in the vicinity of Ipswich by Governor Bourke which he refused, thinking that such a primitive and apparently worthless locality would never be anything more than it then was, and that consequently the land would never be of any value. He subsequently built a hotel at the corner of Brisbane and East Streets, which was called the “Queen’s Arms”, and which, under the name of the Clarendon Hotel, existed until about two years ago, when, as our readers will remember, it was destroyed by fire. After conducting this hotel for a few years, he turned his attention to the business of general storekeeper, building and opening a store in East Street.
In 1834 – thirty-two years ago, Mr Thorn became the owner of Normanby Station, a magnificent tract of country, some twenty miles from Ipswich, a large portion of which is now converted to freehold, and is managed by Messrs John and Charles Thorn, sons of the deceased gentleman.

By steady and energetic perseverance, Mr Thorn succeeded in raising this station to a high standard, and it has now become one of the most valuable pastoral properties in West Moreton. Here the deceased gentleman spent some of the best days of his life, and many an old inhabitant now lives who can tell many an interesting anecdote of those good old times, and of the affable old gentleman who by his old eccentricities and comical “colonialisms” often scattered gloom and mellowed the hard fate of those whose misfortunes it was to experience in their most unwelcome forms the “ups and downs” of colonial life.

Previous to separation, Mr Thorn had the honour of being the first representative in Parliament for this district, having been returned as one of the members for the then West Moreton electorate. He was elected in company with Dr Nelson and Mr Broughton; and it is somewhat significant as showing how much he was respected in the district, as on that occasion, he had the honour of being placed at the head of the poll. The Herbert Ministry, it will be remembered, was then in power; and Mr Thorn continued to represent the district for some two sessions, when he resigned in consequence of increasing years. His Parliamentary career, although brief, was nevertheless productive of much good. He was a consistent and earnest advocate of the people’s rights; and, allowing for the frailties of human nature, he fought with an earnestness and consistency for what he considered just and right, worthy the imitation of some of our more punctilious but less practical legislators of the present day.

True, he did not possess the gift of eloquence, and it is equally true that he did not often try the patience of the House; but – and here is a leaf worth reserving – he knew from experience that neither long wordy speeches nor pretended sincerity ever did or ever could eradicate the evils which then existed, and he denounced them with a bluntness which may probably have given offence to some, but which received the approbation of every right-thinking member of the community.

There are many present in the colony who will readily endorse our remarks, and who know from experience what we mean. It was not the object of every member of our first Parliament to effect – what should be the aim of every representative – “the greatest good for the greatest number”, but it cannot be denied that Mr Thorn was an exception – a noble exception, and to his honour be it said he never sacrificed his principles at the insistence of either friend or foe.
When Ipswich was proclaimed a municipality, Mr Thorn was elected one of the aldermen, and on the foundation of the Ipswich Grammar School, he was chosen as one of the trustees of the institution. He always manifested the deepest interest in the success of the school, and it was only when compelled by the increasing infirmities of age that he resigned the office a few years ago. Of late years, he took no active part in politics, but he always showed a sincere desire to promote the interests of the whole colony. The deceased gentleman has left a widow and nine of a family to mourn their loss. Three of his sons hold seats in the Legislature; one, Mr George Thorn, being the present Postmaster-General of the colony.

In reviewing the career of Mr Thorn we should like to point out the grand secret of his success. Whatever he undertook was entered into with spirit, with earnestness and with a determination to conquer. As an old friend of his remarked to us yesterday, this was one of his chief characteristics, and it was this more than anything else which won for him that admiration and respect which whilst amongst us it was his privilege to enjoy.
Life Summary -
published in Obituaries Australia website: [www.oa.anu.edu.au](http://www.oa.anu.edu.au)

**Birth**
11 April 1806, Stockbridge, Hampshire, England

**Death**
28 April 1876, Ipswich, Queensland, Australia

**Cultural Heritage**
- English

**Religious Influence**
- Anglican

**Occupation**
- commandant/supervisor of convicts
- defence forces personnel (British)
- landowner
- local government councillor
- Member of Lower House
- publican
- shop/store owner

**Military Service**
- 4th (King's Own) Regiment

**Clubs**
- North Australian Club (Qld)

**Key Organisations**
- Ipswich Grammar School (Qld)
- Ipswich Turf Club (Qld)

**Key Places**
- Queens Park (Ipswich, Qld)

**Properties**
- Normanby (Qld)
- Nukienda (Qld)
- Rosebrook (Qld)
- Warra Warra (Qld)

**Workplaces**
- Commissariat (NSW)
- Commissariat (Qld)
- Limestone Hill penal settlement (Qld)
Jane Thorn
(nee) Handcock
(1820 (ca) – 1883)
This is Jane’s story:

Jane’s journey to Australia

Jane Handcock was born into a happy family in Castletown, West Meach, Ireland in 1820 to Robert Handcock, gentleman, and Anne Somerset. Jane had two older sisters and one older brother. Before long, her mother and father, Anne and Robert Handcock added another five sisters to their family. It is believed that Robert had been a soldier, but suffered ill health and had lost most of his eyesight.

Tragedy struck the family in 1833 when Anne, aged forty, died. Her youngest daughter Hannah was only two. Jane was aged about fourteen. In 1836, about three years after Anne’s death, the family immigrated to Sydney with their father (Jane was aged about seventeen). The eldest and only male child was William (aged about twenty-one). Jane’s sisters were Mary and Bridget (aged about twenty and nineteen), Ellinor (also known as Ellen) (about fifteen), Anne (about twelve), Elizabeth (about eleven), Frances (about eight), and Hannah (about five).

The older girls all secured free passages as part of 263 single female bounty emigrants on the Duchess of Northumberland leaving Cork in May, 1836. The ship full of mainly single female passengers was sent to Australia to help the males find brides. To fill the quota, some thirty or forty of the female emigrants had been taken from the streets and penitentiary of Cork and were of an abandoned character. Jane’s father, brother and the younger sisters secured paying passages.

It was a dreadful voyage with inclement weather, threatening pirates, inadequate food, too much wine, and deck and passageways crowded with excess cargo. It would probably have been quite a difficult trip for the family.

Jane took up employment as a domestic in Sydney on the 3rd of October, 1836. It is probable that the family lived together in Sydney until they secured employment or married. It is thought that the younger sisters lived with their father, possibly caring for him because he was not well. The reason for the move to Australia is not known. One hopes that they had a sponsor in Australia – someone to guide them in their quest for a new life in a young and exciting country.
Jane's life in Australia

Less than a year later, in 1837, Jane met and married George Thorn. She was young, aged only seventeen or eighteen and her groom was fifteen years older. It was a whirlwind courtship. George was handsome and intelligent and Jane was an attractive young lady. It is not known how they met.

On the 2nd of November, 1838, the couple was blessed with their first son, George Jnr. Jane’s world was complete – a handsome and loving husband and a beautiful bouncing baby boy.

Her father and siblings also lived near her in Sydney, a bustling town full of excitement and people. Life was indeed sending many blessings their way.

Oh dear, things were to change dramatically in 1839 when George was transferred to Moreton Bay. Of course, Jane, the faithful wife, was happy to accompany her husband to a new life in a new place.

Late in 1839, Jane was rowed up the Bremer River with husband George and infant son George Jnr, to their new home. George was in charge of the settlement called Limestone Station which was previously a convict settlement but required workers and an overseer to work the crops and look after the animals. Jane was the first free female white settler to live in the area which later became known as Ipswich.

The family settled down in the small brick cottage near the Bremer River previously occupied by soldiers who had been there to look after the convicts.

As the birth of their second son became imminent, Jane travelled to Brisbane and it was there, on the 6th of November 1840 that their second son, George Henry was born. It is indeed a mystery as to why they christened this new baby with the same name as his father and brother because he was always called Henry.

There were five eventful years for Jane, each subsequent year bringing an event of note:

- 1836: arrived in Australia from Ireland
- 1837: married George Thorn
- 1838: first son, George Jnr, was born
- 1839: arrived in Limestone, as first white female free settler
- 1840: second son, George Henry (known as Henry) was born
About 1842, Jane was thrilled when her older sister, Bridget and her husband, Michael Burns, came to Limestone. Bridget had been her bridesmaid when she married George. Bridget and Michael managed a hotel for George.

Sometime in 1842 was when the family home was swept away by floods – that would have caused quite a bit of alarm for the family.

Also at the end of 1842, George and Jane welcomed their first daughter, Jane. It has been rumoured that baby Jane was actually born beside the roadside between Brisbane Town and Limestone.

When 1843 began, the Thorn family had two little boys and a baby daughter. Perhaps it was not a good year for George to retire from his government position which had a steady income. However, the couple was full of hope for their new life and set up a store to sell merchandise. They also established a house of accommodation and worked very hard to make a living.

In 1844, there was more joy with the birth of baby Charles.

Jane’s world continued to get even better in 1846 when her brother William Handcock arrived in Limestone and opened a shop.

Fanny Handcock (Jane’s younger sister) was already living in Limestone and in 1846, aged seventeen, she married the much older William Thomson.

It is heartening to know that five of Jane’s sisters and her brother came to Limestone and Toowoomba to live and that when she came to Limestone with George, it was not the last time that she had contact with her family of origin. Two of her sisters, Eliza and Bridget remained. It is not known for sure what happened to Jane’s father, Robert but we believe that he remained in Sydney due to his ill health. However, he is to be admired and thanked for bringing his family to Australia after the death of his wife.

Life became even busier for Jane when another son, John was born on the 23rd of November, 1847.

Jane’s brother William decided to leave Limestone after two years working in his shop. William moved to Drayton, just outside of Toowoomba, in 1848. Jane said goodbye to him, wishing him all the best.

Her father and other sisters continued to live in Sydney.
1849 was a year mixed with joy and sadness. Jane’s younger sister Elizabeth (Eliza) came to Ipswich with her husband, Richard Harvey. She stayed in Ipswich until she died in 1892. What a wonderful time the three sisters (Jane, Eliza and Bridget) had living in the same town.

Jane’s father, Robert Handcock, died in December, 1849, in Sydney.

The next year, 1850, there was another death in the family when Michael Burns, the husband of Jane’s older sister Bridget, died.

That year also saw the birth of baby Joseph Arthur Thorn. Sadly Joseph did not survive infancy. Jane and George grieved together for their baby son.

Jane’s older sister Bridget married Jacob James in 1851, so that would have given some joy back to Jane.

George and Jane’s first-born son, George Jnr, left home to attend the King’s School, Parramatta, at the age of thirteen, in 1851. He was there for four years.

1851 another wedding – this time it was Jane’s youngest sister Hannah when she married Brisbane squatter Arthur Lloyd in Limestone but moved to the Drayton area. It can be assumed that she lived in Ipswich prior to her wedding, but the date she arrived and which sister (Jane or Eliza) she lived with is not known. ‘

Two years later, 1853, life became hectic again when George and Jane’s son William was born on the 3rd of September.

More children arrived for Jane and George – 1855 brought another daughter, Sarah Elizabeth, and another son, Albert, on the 24th of June, 1857.

Jane’s younger sister Fanny lost her husband William Thomson in 1857, but a year later, in 1858, she married Francis Farrington.

There was much pride when young George Jnr achieved his Bachelor of Arts Degree at the Sydney University in 1858.

What an exciting year 1859 was - Jane returned to England with her husband George and daughter, Sarah, as well as George Jnr and other family members. They visited George’s father, Simon, and other family members.

Whilst the family were in England, George and Jane’s daughter, Ida Australia, was born on the 15th of May, 1859. They visited George’s family of origin.
The Thorn family had an exciting trip home because on the ship was Governor Bowen who later became Governor of Queensland. He and his wife, Lady Diamantina Bowen, became firm friends with the Thorns.

Whilst the family was in England, their new home was being built in Limestone on the corner of Brisbane and East Streets. When they returned in November, they moved into their new residence. It was a grand home indeed – two stories with lots of room for their large family.

**1860** - Jane’s husband George was elected as a member of the first Legislative Assembly of Queensland, and served on that Parliament for almost two years. They were certainly exciting times for Jane. There might have been lots of long trips to Brisbane to attend social events, although Jane had a new baby and young children, so perhaps it would have been difficult for her to attend.

Almost a year later, in **1860**, George and Jane’s eldest daughter, Jane, married George Harris at St Paul’s Church of England, Ipswich, on the 13th of October. This was the first Thorn wedding in that church.

In **1862**, there was another Thorn wedding – this time it was their second son, Henry, who married Rebecca Willis, at St Paul’s Church, Ipswich, on the 11th of April. It was a grand occasion indeed.

**1862** was also the year when George was elected as an alderman on the Ipswich City Council. The Thorns were still living in their home on the corner of Brisbane and East Streets.

However, the family only lived in their new residence for three years and in **1863**, they moved into *Claremont*, when George purchased the grand stone home from John Panton.

**1864** brought another death, this time it was Simon Thorn, George’s elderly father, who died in England at the age of eighty-seven. Thankfully, the family had seen him five years earlier when they visited him in England.

George was getting older and perhaps losing his passion for community service. In **1865**, George finished his council career. Jane could now look forward to spending more time with her husband and enjoy their many grandchildren.

That same year, Jane’s younger sister Fanny, moved away from Ipswich to live in Allora with her second husband, Frances Farrington. Jane was happy for Fanny but sad to see her go because Allora was a long way to travel most probably by horse and cart.
In 1867, George and Jane’s son, Charles, married Frances Smith on the 28th of February.

George and Jane continued to live happily in their beautiful home *Claremont*, bringing up their family, although Jane, Henry and Charles had married and moved out of home.

It was seven years before there was another Thorn Wedding. Their second daughter, Sarah married Thomas Rome in St Paul’s Anglican Church, Ipswich, on the 15th of January, 1874.

The next year, 1875, their son, John, married Frances Marsh.

On New Year’s Eve 1875, George fell from his horse and broke his leg. He convalesced at home at *Claremont* but developed a bed sore. Jane’s world fell apart on the 28th of April, 1876, when her husband George died at the age of seventy, at home surrounded by his family. Jane was aged fifty-seven.

But life goes on.

Only a couple of months later, on the 6th of June, 1876, Jane’s eldest son, George Jnr, was appointed as Premier of Queensland – how proud she was and how she thought about George Snr and how he would have enjoyed George Jnr’s success in politics.

Later that year, on the 11th of October, Jane’s son, William, married Georgina Ord at Nukinenda, near Toogoolawah.

Two months later, on the 16th of December, 1876, Jane’s youngest daughter, Ida, married Donald Wallace, at the age of seventeen in St Paul’s Church of England, Ipswich. How bittersweet that would have been for the whole family. Ida would have made a stunningly beautiful bride.

1876 was an eventful year for Jane – the death of George, the appointment of George Jnr as Premier of Queensland, and the wedding of her son William and daughter Ida.

Just two months after Ida’s wedding, on the 27th of February, 1877, Jane suffered more grief with the death of her sister, Bridget James (who lived in Ipswich) aged sixty.

Jane lived on in the family home named *Claremont* in Ipswich for a short time.

But there was another blow to fall on the 18th of August, 1877 - Jane’s son Charles died suddenly, at the age of thirty-two.
Jane was so unhappy – her husband, sister and son had died, and life was just so hard for her, so she went out to Warra to live with her son Henry and his large family at the Warra Warra property. Her grandchildren rallied around her and brightened her day.

Sometimes a wedding can lift a mother’s spirit and on the 14th of February, 1878, Jane’s eldest son, George Jnr, married Celia Uniacke at Ellengowan, near Toowoomba. Jane was very happy for them.

Jane’s son Henry received a blow to the head during a cricket match some time in 1878 and needed to leave the property at Warra and return to Ipswich. (There is another version of events for Henry’s ill health but because it cannot be proven, it is prudent not to put it in print.)

Jane’s obituary states that she was living at Warra just prior to her death and she came down to Ipswich when she became ill. The informant on her Death Certificate was George Thorn of Warra. One of Henry’s sons was named George so perhaps he took over management of Warra Warra Station at Warra after his father came down to Ipswich for health reasons in 1878.

Sadly, on the 19th of April, 1880, Henry, died at the age of thirty-nine.

How much more grief could Jane endure.

Three years later, on the 14th of April, 1883, Jane died at the age of sixty-three. The cause of death on her death certificate is stated as being morbus cordis (chronic heart disease) and Chronic Brights disease (kidney disease).

She had had an extraordinary life.

A description of Jane was given by Henry Stuart Russell when he wrote about a visit he had with George and Jane Thorn in 1840:

“See again, by his side, standing the earnest, active, faithful wife who has dared to brighten by her presence this dark corner of the land. What a contrast! The upright and intelligent man, and the so winsome helpmate, willingly allotting themselves to the charge of a prison post....”

In later years, along with her husband, Jane went on to become a shopkeeper, then ran a simple house of accommodation. In 1841, Thomas Archer described her as a fine, handsome, well-dressed specimen of the sex that she was.
An obituary appeared in the “Queensland Times”, on the 17th of April, 1883, when it reported on Jane’s death which happened on the 14th of April. Some of the information in the obituary, such as the age Jane was when she came to Australia, and the profession of her father, is different to other information which is believed to be more likely to be correct.

One by one, the old residents of this district are passing away. The late Mrs G Thorn was a very old colonist. She was, in fact, the first free European woman who came to reside in the district which is now Ipswich. This was in the year 1839, or 44 years ago.

The deceased lady was a native of Athlone in the county of Westmeath Ireland, her father having occupied for many years the post of Clerk of Petty Sessions in her native town. She left this place however, at the early age of 9 years and came to New South Wales.

There she married, while still quite a young woman, the late Mr George Thorn who, about 2 years afterwards, was appointed to the charge of the Government’s settlement which formed the foundation of Ipswich.

Mrs Thorn has resided here almost ever since; but for the last 2 years or so she has lived chiefly at Warra, on the Darling Downs.

It was there that the first symptoms of her last illness was manifested and after remaining there unwell for a week, she came down to Ipswich on the Saturday before Easter and was attended by Dr Lightoller. She seemed to rally a little at first and hopes of her recovery were entertained, but the improvement in her health was of brief duration. When she became worse, her medical attendant called in consultation Drs Osborne and Taylor, the latter from Brisbane. Mrs Thorn however gradually became weaker and died quietly very early on Saturday morning last. The illness from which she suffered was some form of heart disease.

Her funeral took place on Sunday afternoon and was attended by a large concourse of people – including many of the deceased lady’s relatives – who assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to one of Queensland’s earliest settlers.

This obituary described Jane Thorn as the faithful wife, the courageous pioneer, the energetic business woman and the formal matriarch.

Indeed, she was.
Death of Jane

This is a copy of the information on the Death Certificate for Jane Thorn. There is an inaccuracy in the number of years she spent in New South Wales. It states that she was in NSW for ten years, but that is not the case. It was most likely two years.
Jane's death in 1883 saved her the grief she would have endured with the death of her youngest daughter Ida in 1889 (aged twenty-nine), her second youngest son John in 1896 (aged forty-eight) as well as her youngest son, Albert being admitted to a lunatic asylum in 1894, dying there four years later in 1898 (aged forty-one). Her other children lived very long lives.

Jane suffered many heartaches - in addition to the loss of her infant son, Joseph, she had to face the death of two of her adult sons, Charles and Henry. After the death of Jane’s husband George, she lost two of her adult sons and also one of her sisters – all happening in the last seven years of her life. Sadly she did not have her beloved George by her side to comfort her in her time of extreme loss.

But Jane had the joy of seeing many of her children marry. Her daughters married wealthy respected gentlemen and her sons married women from well-respected families.

Jane's eldest daughter Jane married wealthy George Harris and lived in Newstead House, in Brisbane. (The Harris’s grandson, Richard Casey went on to become Governor General of Australia.)

In addition to her husband George Thorn being a member of the first Legislative Assembly for Queensland, four of Jane and George’s sons (George Jnr, Henry, John and William) were members of the Queensland Parliament, with George Jnr becoming Premier for a short time. She would have been a very proud mother.

There were many grandchildren – about forty-six. What a wonderful grandmother Jane would have been.

Jane’s influence on early Ipswich was far-reaching, and included her siblings and their families.

This can be said for most of the early pioneering families.

She was certainly the epitome of a pioneer – a strong, brave, capable and loving woman – to be admired and respected by all.
The Thorn family burial plot is in the Ipswich General Cemetery. It consists of a large stone obelisk surrounded by a metal fence. It is located near the main gate on Cemetery Road. It is number eight on the Ipswich City Council Cemetery Trail.

The photo is from the Queensland Times and is of Marjorie Connolly, at the grave of her pioneering great-grandfather George Thorn.

George Snr was the first to be buried in the plot in 1876.

Also buried in this plot are:

- Charles Thorn (son of George) 1877
- Henry Thorn (son of George) 1880
- Jane (George’s wife) 1883
- Albert (son of George) 1898
- Rebecca Thorn (wife of Henry Thorn) 1916
- Robert Somerset Thorn (son of Henry) 1927

The Ipswich City Council is currently investigating if any other Thorn family members are buried in this plot.
This is Ipswich in 1880 – photo taken from the Post Office tower, looking towards Denmark Hill.
Jane’s family of origin

Jane came to Australia with her father, Robert, who, following the death of his wife, Anne, brought all eight of the Handcock sisters and their brother William to Australia. It is believed that Robert was almost blind.

William, Bridget, Frances, and Elizabeth all lived in Limestone in its pioneering days. William and Hannah moved to Drayton, and Mary lived in Drayton. Two sisters, Anne and Ellen stayed in Sydney with their father. Only Bridget and Eliza stayed in Ipswich.

Following is some information about Jane’s siblings.

William Handcock: 1815 (ca) – 1890

William opened a store in Limestone in 1846. He stayed until 1848.
That’s when he moved to Drayton, near Toowoomba where he became the driving force behind Drayton Township. He established a store there in 1848 becoming the town’s first Mayor.

William purchased extensive property in the region and married Jane Corbet in Sydney in 1849.

In 1859 he became the first and last member for the Darling Downs in the NSW Parliament.

Unfortunately, he was forced into insolvency and was admitted to the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum in January, 1890 where he died in December of that year.
Bridget (Handcock) Burns/James: 1817 (ca) - 1877

Bridget married Michael Burns in 1839 and when they came to live in Ipswich some years later, they became managers or licensees of the *Prince of Wales* Hotel and later, the *Horse & Jockey* Hotel for their brother-in-law George Thorn.

Following Michael’s death in 1850, Bridget married Jacob James, a Publican, in 1851.

Bridget continued to live in Ipswich until her death in 1877. She is buried in the Ipswich General Cemetery.

Frances (Handcock) Thomson/Farrington: 1828 - 1892

In 1846, when she was aged about seventeen, Fanny married William Henry Shetland Thomson (Government Overseer), aged fifty-one.

William died in 1857 leaving her with two young daughters.

As a young widow of twenty-nine, in 1858 she married a local carpenter Francis Henry Farrington. They continued to live in Ipswich for seven years. They had six children in Ipswich.

The family moved to Allora and took up land in the Clifton area, where they had another three children. From very humble beginnings she had married well, had and reared a large resourceful family.

Frances died at Clifton in 1892, surrounded by her loving family with the dignity befitting one who established herself as a true pioneering woman of the nineteenth century.
Elizabeth (Handcock) Harvey: 1825 (ca) - 1892

Elizabeth (Eliza) married Richard Harvey, and they came to Queensland from Sydney in 1849, with the first four of their thirteen children.

He immediately began his business in Brisbane Street, Ipswich as a blacksmith/wheelwright.

In the bullock driving days, the various shops comprised in this large establishment were the scene of continuous busy activity. It is noted in his obituary “Queensland Times” March 6, 1891.

“Richard is well known to every resident in Ipswich as well as to the numerous teamsters plying to and fro. Although of a modest and retiring disposition few men in Ipswich were more liked and respected than he, for Richard Harvey was a true and warm hearted friend.”

"Who Lived Where...Ipswich 1854"
Ipswich Genealogical Society Inc - Bremer Echoes - Vol.15 No.1 March 1977

A little further westward was a cottage occupied by a Mr Harvey and his family. In the large yard at the rear of the cottage a large shed stood, in which blacksmithing and wheelwright work was carried on. In 1854, it was chiefly the old-fashioned two-wheel bullock dray that was turned out, or came in for repair. Mrs Harvey's maiden name was Handcock and she was a sister of Mrs George Thorn senior, Mr Handcock (storekeeper of Drayton), Mrs Lloyd and Mrs Mack of Drayton.

Hannah Belle (Handcock) Lloyd: 1831 - 1915

Hannah was the youngest of the eight Handcock sisters.

She married Arthur Robert Lloyd, a Brisbane Valley Squatter at Ipswich on July 26th 1851, and moved to the Drayton area.

Hannah had a family of eight children but sadly only four survived her.

She died in Toowoomba in 1915 and was buried in the Lloyd family plot in the Toowoomba/Drayton cemetery.
George and Jane Thorn’s legacy

That this family lived up to all standards of the time is amply demonstrated in recorded history. They left a fine legacy which, through their descendants (and their spouses) includes:

- A Governor-General of Australia
  *(Lord Richard Casey, great-grandson of George and Jane)*

- A Mayor of Drayton
  *(William Handcock, brother of Jane Thorn, née Handcock)*

- A Mayor of Toowoomba
  *(William Thorn, son of George and Jane)*

- A Representative in the Parliament of NSW before separation.
  *(Donald Wallace - married Ida Thorn, daughter of George & Jane.)*

- A Premier of Queensland
  *(George Thorn Jnr, son of George and Jane)*

- Queensland Members of the Legislative Assembly
  *(George Jnr, Henry, John, and William Thorn were sons of George and Jane)*

- A prominent Shipping Agency with worldwide connections
  (through Frances Marsh, wife of John Thorn
  *(son of George and Jane) whose family owned a fleet of clippers, similar to the “Onedin Line”.*

- numerous connections with pastoral and agricultural families throughout the Darling Downs, Roma and Surat areas.
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