

## John Thwaites, clockmaker, and Henrietta his wife.

John Thwaites, the seventh of at least twelve children, was born to Ainsworth and Sarah Thwaites in July 1757. He was baptised the following month at St Giles Church, Cripplegate. His parents experienced much sadness, for they lost most of their offspring at a very early age.



*St James church, Clerkenwell.*

Ainsworth Thwaites was a clockmaker of great renown, an occupation that had been practised in the family for many generations. He founded Ainsworth Thwaites and Company in 1740 and in around 1772 he apprenticed young John to learn the skills. By 1780 John was heading the firm, which he then moved from its premises in Clerkenwell to Bowling Green Lane. When his father died in 1794, the business was thriving.

John Thwaites married Henrietta Walford, a widow, on August 1st 1801 at St James' Church, Clerkenwell. In 1815 he served as Master of the Clockmakers Company and in 1816 he joined forces with his nephew, George Jeremiah Reed (b1780) to form Thwaites and Reed and to ensure the safe future of the business. In 1819 and 1820 he again served as Master of the Clockmakers Company.

He made his will in 1818 when he and Henrietta were living in Islington. Did they move afterwards to Compton for a quieter, healthier life? Perhaps they already lived there for periods; the turnpike road brought travellers from South London to Compton quite swiftly and many people purchased or rented a country abode. As well as attending the church services, he must surely have been up the ladder to inspect the very distinctive clock in the tower.

John died in late 1826 and both he and Henrietta are buried at Compton. The memorial stone gives the following



inscription: *To the memory of Mr John Thwaites, many years an eminent Clockmaker in Clerkenwell London Who died at his house in this parish on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1826 aged 69 years Also of Henrietta Thwaites relict of the above who died October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1845 aged 88 years.*

It is not known where he lived in Compton.

John's will expresses both his personal devotion to Henrietta and his respect for her business acumen. Henrietta was his sole executrix and she and George Reed formed a working partnership to ensure the survival of Thwaites and Reed. George died in 1831 but he had several surviving sons left to continue with his affairs, including John Thwaites Reed, who had been specifically detailed in his great uncle's will. Henrietta had stayed in the area after she was widowed; she was living in Stoke Road, Guildford by 1841 and she remained there until the end of her life.



*A clock by John Thwaites in the Portico Library, Manchester*

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### References

Mycroff family tree, posted on Ancestry.co.uk

Wikipedia

British Museum, London Metropolitan Archives.

Will of John Thwaites, PCC 1826.

1841 census.

Parish registers of St Giles Cripplegate, St James Clerkenwell and St Nicholas Compton.