

## NOTES FROM THORNHAM

An early report mentioning Thornham Magna is in the *Ipswich Journal* of 18th August 1787: “The following persons have been convicted of reeling false and short yarn, viz. Eliz. Marjoram of Middleton; Amy Eade, Yoxford; Eliz. Barber, Laxfield; Mary Peck, Earl Soham; Ann Rattlar, Eliz Colthorpe, Mary Crane, and Sarah Hammond, Kelsale; Eliz. Porter, Hacheston; A. Frost, Thornham Magna; Eliz. Sheldrake, Winston, and Eliz. Watts, Wingfield.”

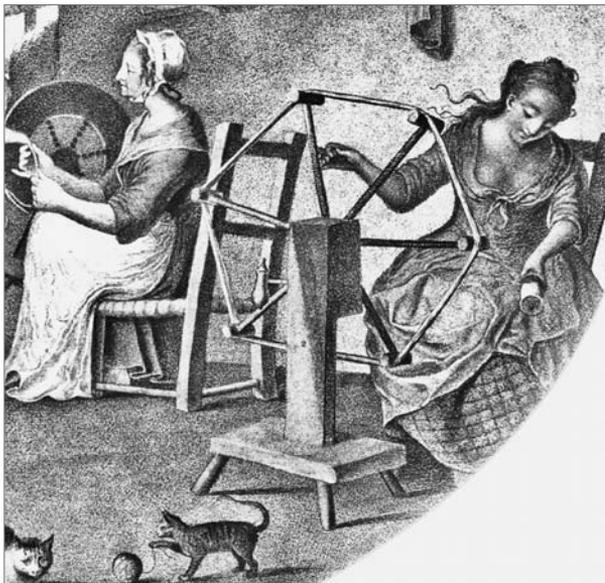
There are no other details. Clearly they are all spinners working at home, and all female except possibly the person from Thornham Magna. They may have been spinning wool but more likely it was hemp which was grown and processed along the rivers of north Suffolk and south Norfolk and woven in Diss, Bungay and Beccles.

Inspectors of yarn standards were enabled by a law of 1768. At first the penalties for infringement included being whipped in the nearest market town. This so discouraged workers from taking up the trade that it was modified to affordable fines in 1774.

Spinning and reeling are shown in this engraving of 1782 where the block on which the spool is mounted contains a dial to count revolutions.

To ensure that hanks of yarn were the correct length, the spinner wound it a known number of revolutions on a standard size reel, before removing the yarn and forming it into hanks. Later, the number of threads in the hank could be counted to check the length and the fineness of the yarn was judged by the weight of the hank – the finer it was the lighter the hank.

Spinning was a vital way for cottagers to earn a living working at home with simple equipment and considerable skill. It continued until about 1800 when local linen was largely replaced by mass produced cotton cloth from Lancashire. Little evidence remains of this 18th century cottage industry so this press cutting is particularly interesting.



**JULY EVENTS IN THORNHAM** ● Wednesday 5th: Chiaroscuro Quartet, Thornham Magna Church, <http://musicatthornham.org.uk> ● Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd: Summer Festival, <http://musicatthornham.org.uk>