

The

HUMPHREYS

families of

Montgomeryshire

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The starting point

The tracing of the HUMPHRIES line has, so far, been the least successful of all.

Practically all the information I have comes from family stories passed on by my father; unfortunately, he was only ten when his grandfather, George Henry HUMPHRIES, died and at that time my father had no interest in family history. However, he did tell me that in the last years of his life my great-grandfather George often stayed with his daughter (my father's mother) and my father believed that he was employed at the Athenaeum Club in London. I was also told, on more than one occasion, that George was not in good health for much of his later life.

Family rumour has it that my great-grandfather George Henry HUMPHRIES was born in Montgomery, Wales, into the family of the HUMPHRIES of MONTGOMERY (mentioned in Burke's *Landed Gentry*). However, as he was illegitimate he was brought up by two maiden aunts (a variation of the story is that he was adopted).

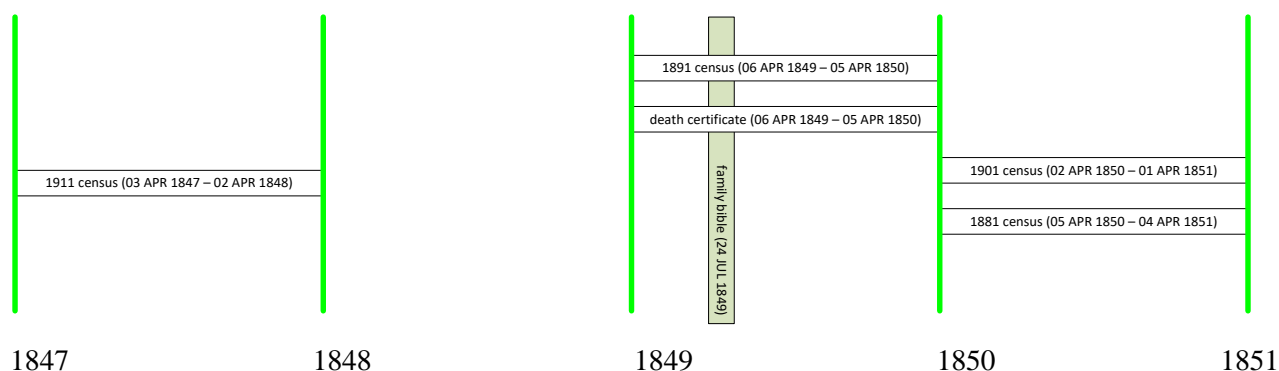
Whether or not there is any substance to this must be treated with a considerable amount of doubt, but my father has always had a firm conviction that the spelling of HUMPHRIES (rather than HUMPHREYS) is correct.

I am fortunate enough to have been given a 'family bible' (from the GRIMSEY (*q.v.*) line). In it George Henry's birthdate is recorded as 24 JUL 1849. Although a possible birth certificate has been found the given date of birth does not agree with this date. I also have a photograph of a man in Army uniform who, it is said, was my great-grandfather George Henry.

Two pieces of solid evidence do, however, exist: his marriage certificate, which shows his father's name as George (deceased), and his death certificate. Unfortunately neither of these has assisted in finding a birth certificate (the marriage certificate simply shows him as 'of full age'). He has also been identified for certain in the 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 census returns; these aren't as helpful as they might be, as will be seen. Putting these pieces of 'evidence' together gives:

Event	Date	Age	likely date of birth		place of birth
			earliest	latest	
1881 census	03 APR 1881	30	05 APR 1850	04 APR 1851	MDX Clerkenwell
1891 census	05 APR 1891	41	06 APR 1849	05 APR 1850	MDX Ealing
1901 census	31 MAR 1901	50	02 APR 1850	01 APR 1851	BRK Reading
1911 census	02 APR 1911	63	03 APR 1847	02 APR 1848	MDX Ealing
death certificate	05 APR 1923	73	06 APR 1849	05 APR 1850	
marriage certificate	04 APR 1880	'full'	-	04 APR 1859	

Clearly these dates aren't compatible and the best deduction is that he was born some time between 06 APR 1849 and 04 APR 1851 – but at least this agrees with the family bible!



A start has to be made somewhere and I have chosen to assume that his place of birth was indeed in Montgomeryshire. I have made this assumption for just one reason – why should the family 'history', such as

it is, feature such a place as Montgomery for his supposed place of birth unless there is some substance to this?

FreeBMD¹ gives only five instances of the birth of a George HUMPHREYS (and none of a George HUMPHRIES) in Montgomeryshire between 1845 and 1855:

<i>surname</i>	<i>forename</i>	<i>quarter</i>	<i>district</i>	<i>ONS ref</i>	<i>my ref</i>
HUMPHREYS	George	Q3/1845	Clun	18 48	1
HUMPHREYS	George	Q1/1846	Montgomery	27 123	2
HUMPHREYS	George	Q3/1846	Montgomery	27 98	3
HUMPHREYS	George	Q2/1850	Atcham	18 1	4
HUMPHREYS	George Henry	Q1/1851	Newtown &c	27 132	5

Of these, Clun and Atcham districts are mainly within Shropshire, with Atcham further north. Both Montgomery and Newtown are further into Wales, with the latter being further to the west.

1851 census

In April 1851, when the census was taken that year, George would have been anything from new-born to four years old. Searching the census return for a “George Humphries” born in Montgomeryshire gives just seven results, including surname variants. Of these four are aged 21 or more and can be ruled out, although these individuals may indeed be related. Details of the remaining three are as follows:

Name	Age	Born in	Parents	siblings
George Humpherys	8	Pool	Thomas, Ann	5th of 8
George Humphreys	7	Llandinam	Matthew, Margaret	5th of 5
George Humphreys	2 months	Llanllwchaiarn	Thomas, Jane	only

(Llanllwchaiarn is a small village just to the east of Newtown)

Even though the birthdates given by various sources, as shown above, are not compatible their evidence is sufficient to indicate that the third ‘George’ in the table above is probably the correct one, with a birthdate of around February 1851.

Further details of this entry are:

Address: Ruins, Llanllwchaiarn, Newtown, Montgomeryshire				Ref. HO107/2497 f261 p17
Head: Thomas HUMPHREYS	married	aged 29	farm labourer	born MGY Kerry
Wife: Jane HUMPHREYS	married	aged 24		born MGY Newtown
Son: George HUMPHREYS		aged 2 m		born MGY Llanllwchaiarn

This means that his birth was, presumably, registered in Q1 of 1851, which indicates that line (5) in the first table above is probably the correct person. This is reinforced because of the second forename and on this evidence a birth certificate was obtained.

Birth certificate

The birth certificate itself reveals more detail:

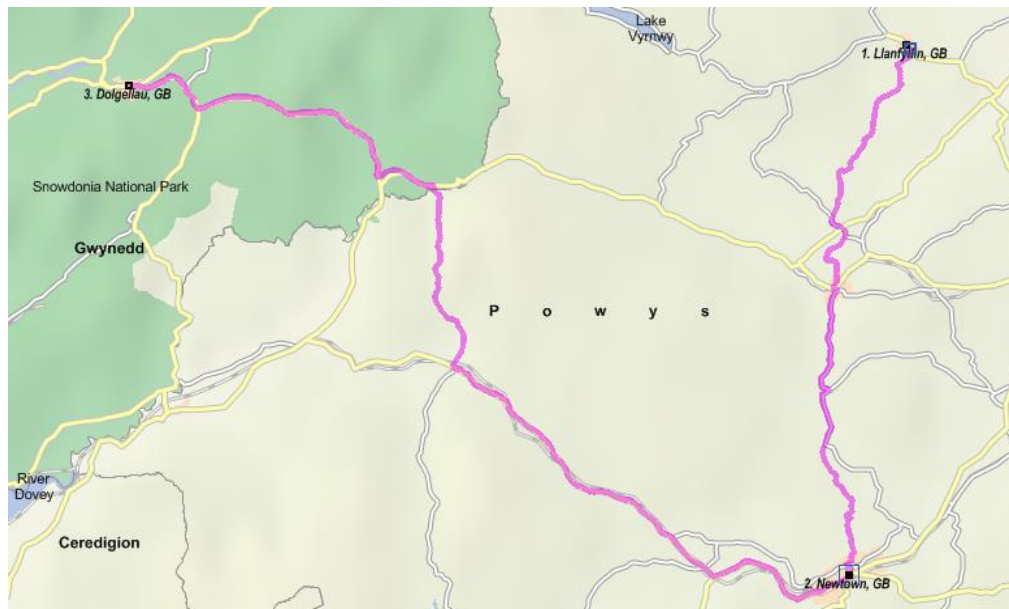
Date of Birth: 27 JAN 1851	Place of birth: Ruins, Llanllwchaiarn
Father: Thomas HUMPHREYS	Mother: Jane HUMPHREYS formerly PUGH
Father's occupation: labourer	Date registered: 31 JAN 1851 (by mother, signing with a cross)

So this appears to be fairly straightforward; the family shown in the 1851 census return is certainly the family with George born on 27th January to parents Thomas and Jane.

¹ www.freebmd.org.uk

Marriage of Thomas and Jane

This is where life becomes a little more difficult, as both FreeBMD and FindmyPast² list only two marriages between a Thomas HUMPHREYS (and none for HUMPHRIES) and a Jane PUGH in the whole of England and Wales between 1838 and 1899. One, in Q4/1856, was registered at Llanfyllin³; the other, in Q4/1864, was registered at Dolgellau⁴ (known to the Welsh as Dolgellau). On the face of it neither of these could possibly be the 'right' marriage because of the date. The map shows the relative position of each location: Llanfyllin is some 22 miles north of Newtown, Dolgellau about 37 miles north-west.



We shall conveniently set aside the problem of Thomas and Jane's marriage for now and return to it later.

George was baptised at Kerry parish church on 08 AUG 1852⁵. His name is shown as 'George Henry', son of Thomas and Jane. Very helpfully, the register shows that he was 1½ years old. So far, so good.

Page 34						
BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of Kerry in the County of Montgomery in the Year 1852.						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parent's Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
Christian.		Christian.	Surname.			
1852.						
11. Nov.	Thomas	Thomas	Perry	Glascod	Farmer	J. Hammond
2nd	son of	Marriet	7 years old	Dolfer		
No. 205						
11. July	Mary	Thomas	Perry	Glascod	Farmer	J. Hammond
2nd	son of	Marriet	2 years old	Dolfer		
No. 206						
10. July	Alma	John	Powell	Nant-y-granna	Farmer	W. Morgan
2nd	son of	Marriet				
No. 207						
8. Aug.	George	Thomas	Humphrey	Kerry	Labourer	W. Morgan
2nd	son of	Jane	1½ years old			
No. 208						

Page 35						
BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of Kerry in the County of Montgomery in the Year 1852.						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parent's Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
Christian.		Christian.	Surname.			
1852.						
15. Aug.	Richard	Richard	Brown	Lepicala	Labourer	W. Morgan
2nd	son of	Jane				
No. 209						
24. Aug.	Francis	Francis	Milly	Lepicala	Labourer	W. Morgan
2nd	son of	Emma				
No. 214						
3. Sep.	John	John	Pennington	Pont-y-bryn	Farmer	J. Hammond
2nd	son of	Sarah				
No. 215						
12. Sep.	William	Lydia	Samuel	Penron	Single	J. Hammond
2nd	son of	William				
No. 216						

² www.findmypast.co.uk

³ ref 11b 476

⁴ ref 11b 775

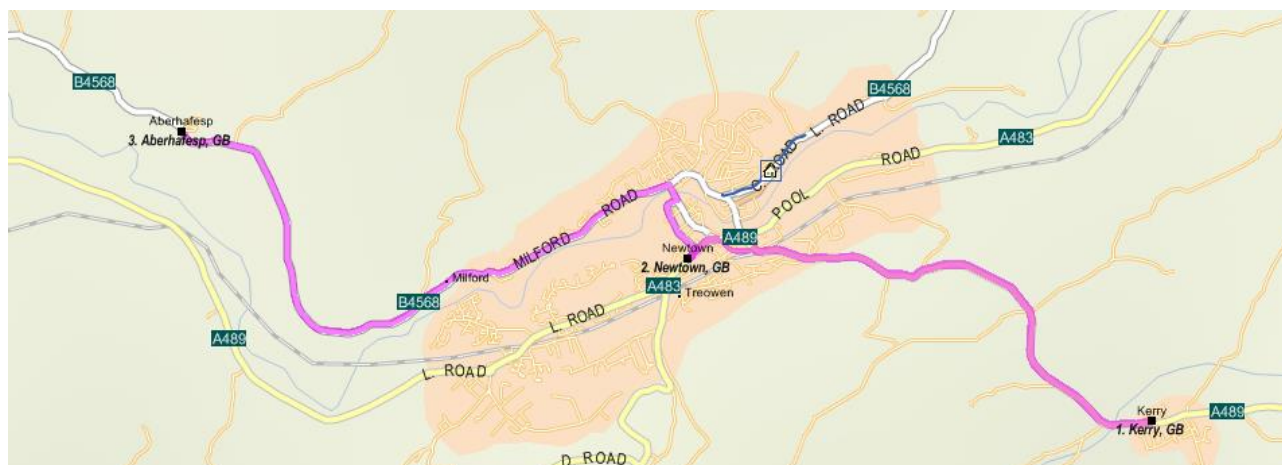
⁵ entry on page 34 of the Kerry baptism register

1861 census

The next census, that of 1861, gives six results for a ‘George Humphries’ born in Montgomeryshire, but there is only one of the right age. This gives the following details (incidentally, this entry will not be found using FindmyPast as the transcription gives George’s surname as WILLIAMS)⁶:

(township of) Brynllwarch, Kerry, Montgomeryshire				Ref. RG9/4249 f44 p15
Head: Edward WILLIAMS	married	aged 25	labourer	born MGY Aberhafesp
Wife: Jane WILLIAMS	married	aged 37		born MGY Llanllwchaearn
stepson: George HUMPHREYS		aged 10		born MGY Llanllwchaearn
boarder: Ann DAVIES		aged 9		born MGY Caersws
son: John WILLIAMS		aged 2		born MGY Kerry
dau: Jane WILLIAMS		aged 1w		born MGY Kerry

Although, from the parents given, this looks less promising, the George is the right age and – rather more importantly – born in the right place. As George is described as a ‘stepson’ it would appear that his mother Jane has remarried which means, presumably, that his father Thomas had died sometime between 1851 and 1861.



This is not conclusive, however, as FreeBMD lists no fewer than five death registrations for a Thomas HUMPHREYS in the district of Newtown between 1851 and 1860. They are as follows:

Q2/1851	27 97	1	Q4/1855	11b 141	4
Q1/1853	11b 156	2	Q2/1859	11b 156	5
Q3/1853	11b 141	3			

However, mother Jane must also have remarried if this theory is correct: and sure enough, FreeBMD gives just one marriage of Jane HUMPHREYS and Edward WILLIAMS in Newtown district: in Q2/1858, ref 11b 367. This ties in nicely with the births of John and Jane. The marriage also effectively rules out death 5 above, but any one of the first four is possible.

Jane’s age isn’t strictly consistent with the 1851 entry, but Llanllwchaearn⁷ is sufficiently close to Kerry to show a high probability that this was indeed the same Jane as ten years previously.

Brynllwarch was formerly part of an estate and is now (2013) a school.

⁶ 1861 census return for Brynllwarch, Kerry; RG9/4249 f44 p25

⁷ Llanllwchaearn (more usually spelt Llanllwchaearn in Welsh) is described by Wikipedia as ‘a village on the outskirts of Newtown in Powys, Wales’

Marriage of Thomas Humphreys and Jane Pugh

Returning to this problem, it is possible that Thomas and Jane weren't married at the time of George's birth, in which case it seems reasonable to assume that her surname was PUGH as that is what is stated on George's birth certificate.

It is also possible that Jane's maiden name had been PUGH, and that she had been married previously. Assuming her year of birth to be 1824 at the earliest (as given in the 1861 census) she is unlikely to have married for the first time before 1844. Her husband then, presumably, died and she married for a second time to Thomas HUMPHREYS. Searching the registers for a marriage registered at Newtown between a Thomas Humphreys and a Jane gives several possibilities:

Q1/1846	Jane PRYCE	MGY Newtown	27 187
Q4/1850	Jane DAVIES	MGY Newtown	27 219
Q2/1851	Jane OWENS	MGY Llanfyllin	27 115

The third postdates George's birth, and the first would have been so close to her first marriage as to be unlikely. The possibility is, then, that Jane PUGH married a Mr Davies who did shortly after the marriage, and in 1850 Jane married Thomas.

There is only one marriage registered at Newtown of a Jane PUGH, and that was in Q2/1841, which would mean that she could have been only 17 – unlikely, but not impossible. One of the possible spouses was James PRICE: unfortunately there is no registration of the death of a James PRICE (or PRYCE) at Newtown between 1840 and 1855.

There are many other possibilities and it is unlikely that the riddle of Jane's marriage to Thomas – or not – will ever be solved.

1871 census entries

In the 1871 census there is just one entry for a George HUMPREYS born in Montgomeryshire of approximately the right age.

Address: Garrig, Kerry, Montgomeryshire					Ref. RG10/5614 f75 p9
Head: James POWELL	married	aged 46	farmer (100 acres)	born MGY Newtown	
Wife: Eliza POWELL	married	aged 46		born MGY Kerry	
son: James POWELL		aged 14		born MGY Llanllwchaiarn	
son: John POWELL		aged 13		born MGY Llanllwchaiarn	
nephew: Pryce OWENS		aged 24	farm servant	born MGY Llanllwchaiarn	
servant: George HUMPHREYS	unmarried	aged 21	farm servant	born MGY Kerry	
servant: Sarah EVANS		aged 14	servant	born MGY Newtown	

Although it is not strictly pertinent, the only likely 1871 census entry for his 'parents' is as follows:

Address: Caeshinkin Cottage, Kerry Brynllwarch, Montgomeryshire					Ref. RG10/5614 f46 p12
Head: Edward WILLIAMS	married	aged 34	gardener	born MGY Aberhafesp	
Wife: Elizabeth WILLIAMS	married	aged 35		born MGY Kerry	
son: John WILLIAMS		aged 12		born MGY Kerry	
dau: Jane WILLIAMS		aged 10		born MGY Kerry	
dau: Frances WILLIAMS		aged 5		born MGY Kerry	
son: Edwin WILLIAMS		aged 3		born MGY Kerry	
son: Pryce WILLIAMS		aged 1		born MGY (???)	

This is certainly the same family, as confirmed by the address, the birthplace of Edward, and the presence of John and Jane. However, Edward was now married to Elizabeth, meaning that Jane had died. FreeBMD gives five possibilities for the death of a Jane WILLIAMS in Newtown:

Q3/1862	age not given	11b 134a	-	1
Q2/1866	8	11b 167	1863	2
Q1/1868	75	11b 164	1793	3
Q1/1869	39	11b 157	1830	4
Q2/1871	56	11b 143	1815	5

where the penultimate column gives the calculated YoB.

Clearly options 2, 3 and 5 can be ruled out: option 4 gives a YoB of 1830, whereas that calculated from the 1851 census return is 1827 and that from the 1861 is 1824. Either this or option 1 is a possibility. Similarly, there are three possibilities for Edward's marriage to an Elizabeth:

Q2/1861	Elizabeth JONES	11b 361	1
Q1/1865	Elizabeth JARDON	11b 263	2
Q1/1867	Elizabeth JONES	11b 299	3

Option 1 is too early (it precedes any of the deaths shown in the previous table); option 3 is unlikely as it occurs after the birth-year of their daughter Frances. Therefore it is likely that Edward married Elizabeth JARDON towards the beginning of 1865. This in turn rules out death (4) above, which leaves the probability that George's mother Jane died in the third quarter of 1862.

George's early years

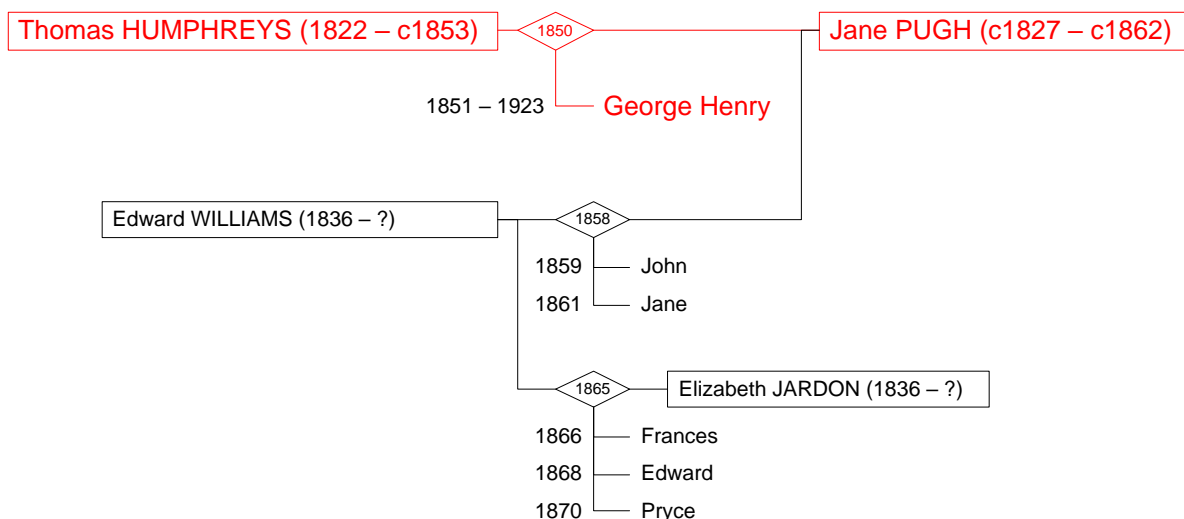
If the assumptions made above are correct, George Henry was born on 27th January 1851, son of Thomas HUMPHREYS, a labourer, and Jane PUGH, who were living together as man and wife in Llanllwchaiarn, a small village to the east of Newtown, in Montgomeryshire. Both his parents were local to the area, and had been born (and presumably had grown up) within a few miles of one another.

Some time between 1851 and 1855 George's father Thomas died, and in 1858 his mother married again to Edward WILLIAMS, who was some ten years younger than Jane. Edward and Jane had two children of their own, John (1859) and Jane (1861) before George's mother Jane died in 1862.

In 1865 Edward married Elizabeth JARDON and they had at least three children: Frances (1866), Edwin (1868) and Pryce (1870).

By 1871 George was working as a farm servant for a local farmer, James POWELL, having lost both his natural parents – his father when he was less than four years old, his mother when he was about 11.

Leaving aside the vexed question of whether George's father and mother were ever married (and if so, when), this sequence of events certainly gives credence to the family tale that he was orphaned and brought up by others.



Later records

I know that my great-grandfather was named George Henry HUMPHREYS⁸.

I have his marriage certificate⁹; showing that his marriage to Emma Maria GRIMSEY took place on 04 APR 1880 in Christ Church, the parish church of Bermondsey, and that the address of both George and Emma was given as 92 New Church Street. George was a gardener, which ties in with his possible previous employment as a farm servant, but his father's name appears as George (deceased).

I have found George and Emma in four census returns (1881 – 1911). There is no doubt that these are the correct entries as in each one Emma, George's wife, is shown as having been born in Thorrington, Essex.

Unfortunately, the details given in the census returns about George are not always compatible.

Census	Address		Reference
1881	20 Weston Street, Clerkenwell, MDX		RG11/355 f89
1891	31 Ambrose Street, Bermondsey, SRY		RG12/379 f133 p23
1901	43a Enid Street, Bermondsey, SRY		RG13/396 f80
1911	116 Piccadilly, London [Athenaeum Hotel]	(George)	RG14/421 ED7 SN103
1911	93 Geneva Road, Brixton, SRY	(Emma)	RG14/2079 ED30 SN96

1881	George H HUMPHRIES	head	30	stoker at club	MDX Clerkenwell	1851
1891	George HUMPHRIES	head	41	waterside labourer	MDX Ealing	1850
1901	George H HUMPHRIES	head	50	kitchen porter	BRK Reading	1851
1911	George HUMFRIES	servant	63	boiler furnace stoker	MDX Ealing	1848

1881	Emma HUMPHRIES	wife	22		ESS Thorrington	1859
1891	Emma HUMPHRIES	wife	33		ESS Thorrington	1858
1901	Emma M HUMPHRIES	wife	42		ESS Thorrington	1859
1911	Emma Maria HUMPHRIES	wife	52		ESS Thorrington	1859

⁸ information from my father (George's grandson)

⁹ marriage certificate (original)

In the last return, that of 1911, it seems clear that George was an employee at the Athenaeum Club in Piccadilly and was staying at the Club on census night. He was one of some 35 members of staff; all the names had been written in the same handwriting and so the substitution of 'Hurfries' is not especially relevant.

Proven theory or speculation?

The events described above – the birth of George to parents Thomas and Jane, and subsequent events up to his appearance in the 1871 census – are sufficiently coherent to have happened to one individual; this much is almost beyond dispute.

Similarly, the last four census returns (1881 – 1911) are indisputably records of the same individual.

The question that has to be answered is: is the George Henry HUMPHREYS (GHH1) who was born and brought up in Montgomeryshire the same George Henry HUMPHRIES (GHH2) that married Emma GRIMSEY and who was my great-grandfather?

Name	My grandfather's name was indisputably George Henry (evidence of my father and the GHH2 set of census results. Between 1840 and 1850 the ONS records 163 registrations of George HUMPHREYS, of which just 10 were 'George Henry'; the corresponding figures for HUMPHRIES were 4 of 108.
Surname	The earlier (GHH1) records generally show HUMPHREYS, whereas the GHH2 ones give HUMPHRIES; this is unlikely to be significant
Birthplace	Family rumour has his birthplace as Montgomery(shire) and this is the premise of the GHH1 results. The GHH2 results do not agree with this but four census returns give three different places of birth!
Father	GHH1 has father Thomas and stepfather Edward; GHH2 claimed (on his marriage certificate) that his father's name was 'George'; but GHH1's father died when he was about four and his mother died only eight or nine years later so he may not have remembered his father or even his father's name
Age	His age is consistent, more or less, with both sets of information; however, his age as stated in the family bible is a couple of years different (if he was brought up by people other than his parents he may not have been sure of his exact date of birth)
Wife	GHH2 married a girl from Essex; how did a labourer's son from Wales meet a girl from Essex?
The Army	Family rumour states that GHH2 was in the Army. Given that he had left the Army by 1880 (date of his marriage) could he possibly have been in the Army for fewer than ten years?

For a long time the last point was a stumbling block, as it was very unusual for anyone to enlist in the Army for fewer than ten years. However, between 1868 and 1874 the then Secretary of State for War, Edward Cardwell, was responsible for introducing a series of reforms of the British Army (these became known as the Cardwell Reforms, for obvious reasons). For the first half of the 19th century men joined the Army for 21 years. A shortfall in Army numbers had resulted in the 'Time of Service in the Army Act 1847', under which enlistment was for ten years, later increased to twelve; but this was still too long for many men. An Act of 1870 allowed a soldier to choose to spend time in the reserves rather than the regulars and be paid fourpence a day, in return for a short period of training each year and an obligation to serve when called up. The minimum length of service varied: seven years for the infantry, eight years for cavalry and artillery, and so on. So it would have been quite possible for George Henry to have been working as a farm servant in 1871, to have joined as an infantry soldier and served until 1878, then to have been discharged from the Army and married in 1880. This could also explain how he met, and later married, a local girl from a village near Colchester.