

The

HUMPHREYS

families of
Montgomeryshire

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The available evidence

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

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 doubtful, but my father has always had a firm conviction that the spelling of HUMPHRIES (rather than HUMPHREYS) is correct.

Practically all the information I have comes from family stories passed on by my father; unfortunately, at the time his grandfather was alive my father had no interest in family history and, in any case, was only ten when his grandfather died. However, in the last years of his life my great-grandfather often stayed with his daughter (my father's mother) and my father believed that he worked at the Athenaeum Club in London.

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

Two pieces of solid evidence do, however, exist: George's marriage certificate, which shows his father's name as George (deceased), and his death certificate. He has also been identified for certain in the 1881, 1891 and 1901 census returns, although these aren't as helpful as they might be. Putting these pieces of 'evidence' together gives:

Event	Date	Age	Earliest	Latest
1891 census	05 APR 1891	41	06 APR 1849	05 APR 1850
death certificate	05 APR 1923	73	06 APR 1849	05 APR 1850
1901 census	31 MAR 1901	50	02 APR 1850	01 APR 1851
1881 census	03 APR 1881	30	05 APR 1850	04 APR 1851
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!

If his birth in Montgomeryshire is accepted as true, then there is only one possibility: that is followed in the remainder of this account and shown below.

Accumulated evidence

Montgomeryshire births

I have always assumed that there must be some substance to the 'born in Montgomery' story for the simple reason that I cannot think of why it should otherwise have been mentioned.

FreeBMD¹ lists 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>page</i>	<i>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 entries

There is just one census entry for a George HUMPHREYS in Montgomeryshire 1845 – 1855:

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	

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

Clearly this is ref 5 in the table above. Searching for the same name within Shropshire gives three results for a George HUMPHREYS, aged 5, 6 and 1 – corresponding, at a guess, to references 2 (or 3), 1 and 4 above. FreeBMD gives the death of a George HUMPHREYS, registered in Montgomery, in Q2/1847, and this is likely to be the missing entry from the table (that is, either 3 or 2).

So it does seem that a George Henry HUMPHREYS was born in Newtown, MGY, in the first quarter of 1851.

Birth certificate

The birth certificate (from reference 5 above) 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 certificate

This is where life becomes a little more difficult, as both FreeBMD and FindmyPast² list only two marriages between a Thomas HUMPHREYS 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 Dolgelly⁴ (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.



One possibility is that Thomas and Jane weren't married, in which case it seems reasonable to assume that her surname was PUGH.

However, FindmyPast does list two marriages of a Thomas HUMPHREYS to a Jane in Montgomeryshire between 1845 and 1855:

Q4/1850	Jane DAVIES	MGY Newtown	27 219	2
Q2/1851	Jane OWENS	MGY Llanfyllin	27 115	1

Either of these might bear further investigation, especially the marriage registered in Newtown: if either bears fruit, why was George's mother shown as 'formerly Pugh' on his birth certificate?

² www.findmypast.co.uk

³ ref 11b 476

⁴ ref 11b 775

1861 census entries

There are two entries for a George HUMPHREYS, born between 1845 and 1855, living in Montgomeryshire: the first shows

Address: Ploughs Cottage, Pentre, Broniarth Upper, Montgomeryshire Ref. RG9/4623 f13 p2

Head: David MATTHEWS	married	aged 42	shoemaker	born MGY Guilsfield
plus his wife Ann and 15-year-old daughter Sarah Ann				
servant: Thomas DAVIES	unmarried	aged 16	shoemaker	born MGY Guilsfield
servant: George HUMPHREYS		aged 15	shoemaker	born MGY Pool

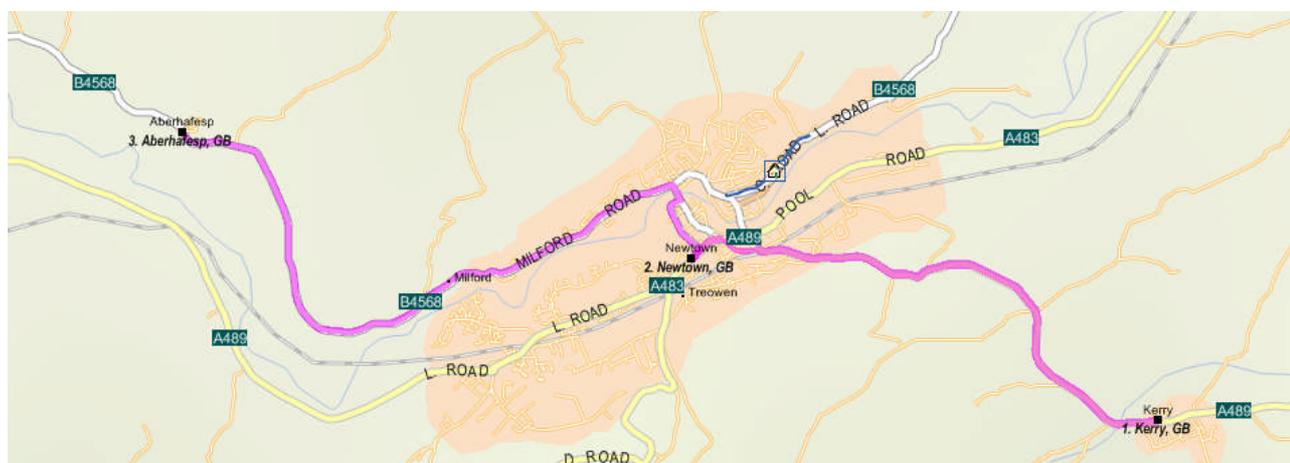
Both the age (the above gives a Year of Birth of 1846) and the Place of Birth (there is a hamlet called Pool Quay less than a mile from Guilsfield) would seem to indicate that this George is either (2) or (3) in the ‘Montgomeryshire births’ table above.

The second entry gives the following details (incidentally, this entry will not be found in FindmyPast as the transcription gives George’s surname as WILLIAMS although the original clearly shows HUMPHREYS):

Address: (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 Llanllwchaiarn
stepson: George HUMPHREYS		aged 10		born MGY Llanllwchaiarn
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.

1871 census entries

In the 1871 census there is just one entry for a George HUMPHREYS 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

Incidentally, 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 remarriage:

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

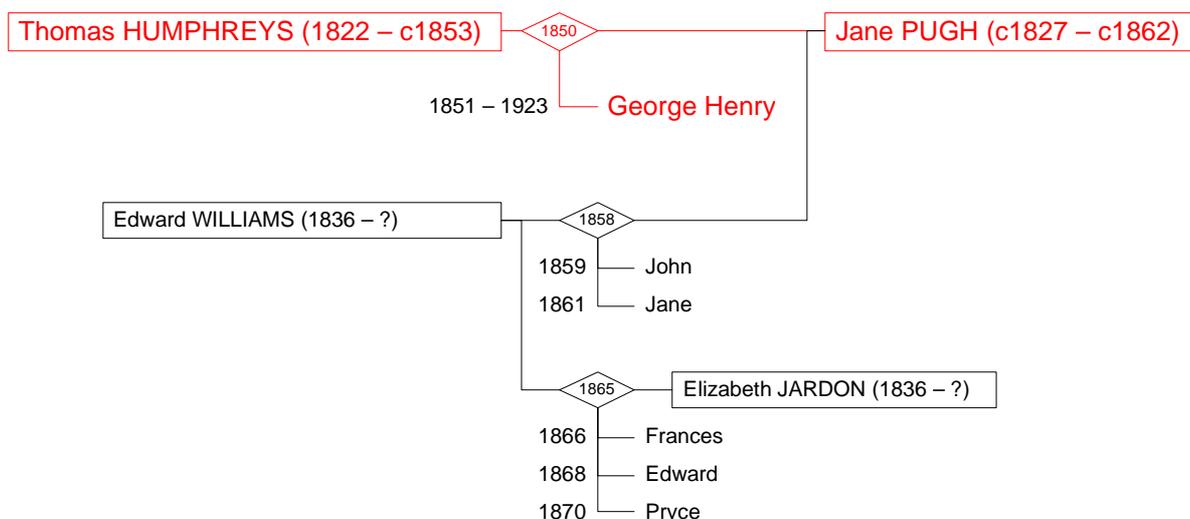
If the assumptions made above are correct, George Henry was born on 27th January 1851, son of Thomas HUMPHREYS, a labourer, and Jane PUGH, who were living together as man and wife in Llanllwchaiarn, a small village to the east of Newtown, in Montgomeryshire. Both his parents were local to the area, and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

Some time between 1851 and 1855 George 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 his 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 only two, his mother when he was about 11.

Leaving aside the vexed question of whether George's father and mother were 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.



1881 census entries

There are no instances of a George HUMPHREYS of approximately the right age living in Montgomeryshire. There are only three in the whole of Wales: two had been born in Flintshire, one in Denbighshire. There are no instances in the entire census of a George HUMPHREYS who admitted to having been born in Montgomeryshire.

More recent records

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

I have his marriage certificate⁵; 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 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). Somewhat unfortunately, the details given in the census returns are not always compatible.

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

⁵ marriage certificate (original)

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 beyond reasonable 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 who was born and brought up in Montgomeryshire the same George Henry HUMPHRIES that was married to Emma GRIMSEY and who became my great-grandfather?

Points in favour	Points against	Comments
name is George Henry		between 1840 and 1850, of 163 registrations of George HUMPHREYS just 10 were 'George Henry'; the corresponding figures for HUMPHRIES were 4 of 108
born in Montgomeryshire		tallies with 'family rumour'
father died in 1853/55		tallies with marriage certificate (father shown as 'deceased' in 1880)
age is (almost) correct	age does not agree with family bible	if first his father and then his mother died while he was young he may not have been sure of his exact age
	father's name was Thomas, not George	as his father died when George was about two and his mother remarried (and, in any case, died when George was about 11) he may not have been sure of his father's name
	married a girl from Essex	how, when and why did he travel from Wales to Essex?
	'my' George was supposedly in the Army before he was married	he may have signed up in Wales and moved to Colchester but he can only have been in the Army for ten years maximum
	spelling of surname is different	this may or may not be significant