



The Letters of George Merryweather
1815 - 1818

Steward of the Beckett Estate, Shrivvenham,
Berks

Seat of Lord George Viscount Barrington

Researched and collated by Neil B. Maw & Vivien Moss

Historical Background

There is no intention here to provide an in-depth study of Beckett and the Barringtons. That subject will be addressed by a future publication bearing the same or a similar title. However, it will be necessary for the reader of this compilation to understand the events leading up to the appointment of George Merryweather as the Steward for the Beckett Estate in the Parish of Shrivenham, Berkshire.

Lord William Viscount Barrington was the second Barrington to bear the title. He was a very successful and influential man. As well as being an M.P. he also held the position at various times of Secretary at War, Treasurer to the Admiralty and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He also held the, '*Ear of the King.*'

In his personal life he had no children, so this required that he had to look to his brothers for an heir. It was his younger brother John who led a distinguished military career as a Major-General, that provided the three sons to continue the Barrington line, William, Richard and George. However, the first two caused much trouble and concerns for their uncle. In his letters that accompanied his Will, we learn that William despaired of the behaviour of his two delinquent nephews; so much so that he decided he could not trust either of them with the administration of his beloved Beckett Estate. Consequently, on his death in 1793, the estate was placed in Trust to be overseen by his three surviving brothers, until such time as a suitable heir was apparent. This happened in 1814 with the death of Lord Richard Viscount Barrington. (4th)

Having been ordained as a priest, George, the third son of John Barrington, tended the Living in Sedgefield, Durham, but was happy to inherit the title of Lord George Viscount Barrington (5th). With full control vested in him, George needed a suitable person to act as his Steward for the Beckett Estate. The previous 21 years of '*Caretaker Stewards*' had left the estate in a mess. Little had been done to keep the farms, houses and cottages in good repair, and many of the tenants were in arrears of rent.

Enter: George Merryweather

Reference Notes to the letters

When reading the transcriptions of these letters there may be terms, words, expressions and values that are not familiar to the reader. It will be useful therefore to explain some of the more common ones here at the beginning of this compilation. Although George Merryweather was clearly a well-educated man, and his handwriting is generally legible, there are occasions when a word cannot be clearly discerned and it has either been marked thus *** or a guess has been made that fits the sentence, and a word has been put in these [brackets]. If no words exist because of damage to the paper, is has been indicated ... *missing* ... thus.

The currency at the time was L.S.D (Pounds, Shillings and Pence) and the symbols that accompany values are shown for example - £1.10.5, or for shillings /-. The measurements of land are A.R.P (Acres, Rods and Perches) and will accompany values for example 1a. 10.r 5p. Measurements of capacity has been explained where possible within the letter for example 8 pence per cwt (hundredweight) 8 pence per pound. A Bushel was commonly used in this period and although it was used to measure numerous goods such as fruit, within these letters it is used mainly for the measurement of Lime. One Bushel was the capacity of 8 gallons of liquid.

With regard to time, most tenancies, and in particular farms, were let either at Lady Day (25th March) or Michaelmas (29th September).

The Monarch of England at this time was King George III who died on 29th January 1820. George Merryweather came to Beckett in April 1815 and the famous Battle at Waterloo took place in June of that year. There is mention of the battle in letter No 9 in the form of a donation request.

The series of letters do not match the probable tenure of George Merryweather. We know that he was replaced by Robert Dawson in 1821. His letters range from April 1815 until the end of 1818, but oddly there are non whatsoever for the year 1817. We can only assume that these were removed for some reason.

The letters of George Merryweather

Precis' of what the letters contain

Apart from letters **No 1 & 4**, all the letters are from George Merryweather to his employer Lord George Viscount Barrington (5th)

No 1. Date. 11th December 1814. Viscount Barrington to George Merryweather, sounding out the possibility of him becoming Steward for the Beckett Estate.

No 2. Date. 15th December 1814. He accepts wholeheartedly the position of Steward and gives the reasons why he's so happy to accept.

No 3. Date. 23rd December 1814. GM is making arrangements to procure the security of the £4000 that Lord Barrington requires in order to take up the post of Steward.

No 4. Date. 28th December 1814. Merryweather to his friend Hollingsworth, thanking him for recommending him to Lord Barrington.

No 5. Date. 2nd January 1815. He's now back from Dorking where he spent Christmas and he is busy procuring the security money.

No 6. Date. 13th January 1815. G.M. is still trying among his relatives to raise the sureties among his family to cover the security required by Lord Barrington.

No 7. Date. 24th April 1815. GM. He has arrived at Beckett. He needs the Rent Roll in order to inspect all the farms & properties on the estate. Needs to sort out his own living accommodation.

No 8. Date. 13th July 1815. The Tax Man has been calling on the estate and is intent on getting his money. GM has been visiting and assessing the farms.

No 9. Date. 28th August 1815. He has been banking after rents collected. He reports the buildings on the estate are in bad repair. Death of Mr Canfield. Lime Kiln now built.

No 10. Date. 29th September 1815. He has made a detailed account of operations carried out which will be sent shortly. Dealing with late Canfield's land at Town End & Bourton. Trouble with Mr Peter Killard interfering in his estate business. List of improved rents.

No 11. Date. 31st October 1815. He has purchased Canfield's land. Lots of details of the Lime transactions coming from the new Lime Kiln, with descriptions of how the kiln is constructed.

No 12. Date. 14th November 1815. Rev Edward Beren's wife, Lady Courtenay is extremely ill & subsequently died. The Kiln at Longcott Wharf belonging to the Canal Company has been offered to Merryweather for him to operate rent free. The Timber on the estate is in a bad state and he explains why.

No 13. Date. 17th November 1815. He's learning all about brick making & goes into some detail and his visit to the Brick maker at Cricklade. Description of where the Brick Kiln is located on the Beckett Estate. The proposed new Gallery in Shrivenham church and Lord Barrington's sponsorship of it. He tells of his meeting with William Canfield on his death bed and his subsequent dealings with his daughters, and how he helps them.

No 14. Date. 20th November 1815. The Charities maintained by Lord B and what he thinks should be done about them. Lots of lists of those receiving charity.

No 15. Date. 21st November 1815. He describes some of the buildings on the estate like the Joiners Workshop and describes how he makes them workable. The new stables put into good repair etc. More description of the Lime Kiln and quarry adjoining it, and a perfect description of its location. Also, a note from Edward Berens to Lord B. (SHS Note. Please see Listing N1547 in online Catalogue for more detail.)

No 16. Date. 30th November 1815. He advises Lord B of the bad economic problems in Berkshire with severe depression and nothing selling. A list that shows how much prices have fallen. Describes the grain imported from abroad problem.

No 17. Date. 18th December 1815. He's got a bad cold. Farmers Johnson & Butler are constantly drunk and their farms will have to be taken from them. The late William Canfield's son has an apprenticeship.

No 18. Date. 15th/16th January 1816. Discussions whether Lord B should buy late Canfield's house. Talks with Mr Blagrove, who has much debt, about perhaps exchanging some land. (SHS Note. We have documentary evidence that William Canfield's house was today's Fern House in Manor Lane.)

No 19. Date. 24th January 1816. He has bought the house late Mr Canfield. Maybe close up all the windows at Beckett House to avoid tax. Got his eye on an excellent piece of ground formerly belonging to the late Mr Wirdnam. (SHS Note. Probably present Recreation Ground and Football Ground.)

No 20. Date 6th February 1816. Sorting out Canfield's house and looking at the course of the new road that is going to be put in (Longcott Road). Talk of building the new Mansion House. Talk of building a Lime House near the Lime Kiln. (SHS Note. GM was told the new Mansion House would be built imminently. In fact it would not be built until 1829.)

No 21. Date. 13th February 1816. Talk of completely taking down the old Beckett House, but G.M. advises caution on this. The house in Shrivenham late Canfield's is cleaning up well. Mr Blagrove is desperate to sell on account of debt. Land at Bourton & Fernham maybe to be sold. Stagnation of business, nothing is selling, even at the Faringdon Great Fair.

No 22. Date. 1st March 1816. Preparation of various accounts. Mary Edgington stands in debt to the Estate & has died in great poverty. Happy to hear Lord B is coming to Beckett this month. The house at Shrivenham late Canfields is being made ready, lots of details and measurements of the rooms. How to send goods from London to Beckett by Harts Waggons. Mrs Lucas the inn keeper at Shrivenham.

No 23. Date. 26th March 1816. Talks of farmers Berkley Wilson and Mr Bennett. Lime production at Beckett goes very well. In building the new Mansion House, big list of things to be considered. More needed from Mr Atkinson but he's very difficult to contact.

No 24. Date. 15th April 1816. G.M.s visit to Birmingham and his amusing dialogue and description of the Locksmith. The explanation of the 'Frolick' between Horatio, his son, and Jonathan Green & the trouble that ensued. G.M.s bout of illness when he was at Birmingham and how it has continued - his description of his symptoms. Problems with Mr Hedges.

No 25. Date. 17th April 1816. More problems with Mr Killard and Mr Hedges. Getting rid of farmer Ackerman and descriptions of his bad behaviour. Tables of cost and measurements in breaking up and amalgamating Ackerman's Farm and Giles'. (SHS Note. We have documentary evidence that Moses Ackerman was tenant of Sandhill Farm.)

No 26. Date. 18th April 1816. The big problem with Mr Hedges the Game Keeper. GM's evidence of his bad behaviour and what is to be done with him. Quite a long and in-depth explanation about the events that has led up to that point.

No 27. Date. 19th April 1816. The details of the encounter of his son Horatio with Jonathan Green and the plot instigated by Hedges, much detail. The lies spread about Mr Crowdy running the Michaelmas Manor Court. GM discharges Hedges until more is heard from Lord B. More details of the house late Canfield.

No 28. Date. 23rd April 1816. Hedges will remain employed with the estate, on the instructions of Lord B. Mr Berens thinks he will have learned a good lesson.

No 29. Date. 24th April 1816. He has persuaded farmer Butler to give up his plough land as being very injurious to him. He has sold 5000 bushels of Lime and received a large order for Bricks & Tiles.

No 30. Date. 10th May 1816. He is sorry he exceeded his powers with respect to Hedges, but he is happy with the changes. Explains how he tried to change the mind of farmer Giles about his farm. More on getting rid of Ackerman.

No 31. Date. 11th May 1816. Things to do ref Mr Killard's farm. The valuable plot of ground that was owned by the late Mr Wirdnam is now for sale. Mr Fairthorne rents it and would like to buy it. GM thinks it would be a valuable asset to the estate.

No 32. Date. 11th June 1816. Short letter. Some general thoughts he has on the building of the new Mansion.

No 33. Date. 18th June 1816. He's expecting a visit from the government Timber Agent but today is the day of the annual Shrivenham Revel. The house late Canfield's now owned by the estate is looking good. More talk on the new Mansion House and how he will be of use. Details Mr Giles' farm being made bigger but more compact.

No 34. Date. 24th June 1816. It starts with a letter from B. Woodroffe, a Tradesman touting for business on the new Mansion House build. He is meeting Mr Durrell at Abingdon.

No 35. Date. 2nd July 1816. A good explanation about the Timber market depression. Wantage Bank has gone bankrupt and could cause a lot of problems locally. Farmer Butler will have to made to quit his farm, the reasons why, and farmer Johnson is even worse.

No 36. Date. 16th July 1816. More about wood and sales of it. More general thoughts and talk concerning the new Mansion erection.

No 37. Date. 1st August 1816. He's met with Mr Durrell. Today is Rent Day on the estate.

No 38. Date. 3rd August 1816. From London Coffee House. He arrived in London a little later than expected, held up because of Rent Day. Depositing money into Lord B's bankers.

No 39. Date. 7th August 1816. The spate of county banks failing is causing lots of problems. Local Shrivenham farmers have gone by Canal boat to Wantage to vote. Mr Durell gave him 50 drawings concerning the new Mansion House. Still talk of exchanging land with Mr Blagrave.

No 40. Date. 9th August 1816. A general explanation about how bad things are economically, it a great depression. He has high hopes for the production of Lime and Bricks at the Kilns.

No 41. Date. 14th September 1816. A general update on the farms. Mr Bennett however, is not a happy man and has been making it very awkward for the new incoming tenant. A few more observations on the new Mansion House. (SHS Note. John Bennett was tenant of Home Leaze Farm now all military zone and the farm house demolished.)

No 42. Date. 26th September 1816. More observations and preparations for the new Mansion House. Details on how the newly arranged farms have been put together. A report of how the harvest has begun and what has been gathered so far.

No 43. Date. 3rd October 1816. The four Pheasants requested by Lord B have been sent. GM thinks that it will be necessary to appoint a new assistant game keeper. More information on the house recently purchased late Mr Canfield.

No 44. Date. 17th October 1816. Information on the Lime Kiln and the positioning of it to service the building of the new Mansion House. Also he mentions the taking down of the ancient part of the old mansion. He has appointed Thomas Ackriel to be the new assistant game keeper. Mr Hedges the Game Keeper was not happy about it but he put him straight. Mr Edgington claims that the estate owes him money. GM has been advised to go to Cheltenham concerning his health.

No 45. Date. 1st November 1816. More talk of the new Mansion. Problems with the Bank failures and the promissory notes that are in circulation.

No 46. Date. 18th November 1816. Written from Cheltenham where GM is at a Clinic. Mentions that the Bishop of Durham (Shute Barrington) will be visiting Shrivenham soon and things are being prepared for him. He is under the care of Sir Arthur Faulkner the Physician and explains what he said about his condition.

No 47. Date. 24th December 1816. Discussions about the preparations for Lord B's sons visiting Shrivenham this Winter. Mr Bennett has a large surplus of Hay to dispose of before he leaves his farm on Lady Day. More information on Mr Bennett in general. Discussion on the purchase of the quality land late Mr Wirdnam. GM has used his influence to have first offer on it.

No 48. Date. 9th January 1818. A rather hurried letter as the Post man is waiting. Several brief pieces of information about the farms.

No 49. Date. 21st January 1818. Starts with a list of major purchases made recently, land and premises and who occupies them. Giles has finally agreed to take on the new farm as the time drew closer to accept or quit. There follows a lot of detail on Giles. Stall Pitts Farm is now the only farm remaining to be let. More details here on fields and prices of letting.

No 50. Date. 9th February 1818. GM writes from London where he has paid some large sums of money into London banks. He's also bought two new Swing Ploughs. The two new roads are coming on and work on Lady Effingham's house continues.

No 51. Date. 17th February 1818. Banking information. The Beans have been sent to Lord B in Stockton. He's had many enquiries this week on letting Stall Pitts Farm. How his offer of unlimited work for the Parish Poor works - details. Work on the new roads, enclosing Stainswick Copse and Lady Effingham's house. He is just on the point of finishing the 7 new cottages.

No 52. Date. 20th March 1818. Stall Pits Farm is now let, but he's had a huge amount of interest in it – more details. The poor state of some of the farms and bad behaviour of the tenants. Talks on buying Chaplewick Farm and adding it to Ruffinwick Farm.

No 53. Date. 22nd April 1818. Sending Pidgeons (sic) to Lady Barrington – details. Operations on-going; Planting trees in Wellington Wood, finishing hedging and ditching at Bowles' Farm, continuing the new Bridle Road from Longcott, pointing the walls at Lady Effingham's residence, pointing the walls of the 7 new cottages, and more. Mr Wilson's separation from his business partners Haines and Gerring. Mr Wilson wishes to do GM harm.

No 54. Date. 19th June 1818. Accounts update – a list of principal figures and notes on various expenses.

No 55. Date. 15th August 1818. Quite a long explanation by GM, of events that happened on his visit home to Darlington, brought about by the death of his father. More information of the agriculture on Shriftenham farms, and especially the bad fly attacks on the Turnips.

No 56. Date. 31st August 1818. An account of the rents from the farms and woodlands etc. More on the difficulties with his father's Will and the subsequent problem of his security for his job as Steward at Beckett.

No 57. Date. 3rd September 1818. A lot of information on the Harvest and many notes and observations.

No 58. Date. 12th September 1818. A long letter. A list of accounts. A detailed account of the events in Darlington and his family, and a painful secret that GM must divulge to his Lordship. More information on matters to do with the farms at Shriftenham. He has bought a field quickly as he had no time to contact Lord B.

No 59. Date. 21st September 1818. A long letter of over 3000 words. Much of it is taken up by his thoughts on the Poor Rates of Shriftenham and why he thinks that the Beckett

Estate is paying far too much. With Lord B's approbation, he intends to attend the Vestry meetings and propose a major change in the way the Poor Rates are calculated.

No 60. Date. 10th October 1818. A list of his latest lettings of fields, properties etc. The price of Cheese at Reading Fair and how much cheese sells for in Shrivenham. He will organise the education of 10 boys to be done in the winter months. Mrs Merryweather recently had the misfortune to fall over in the Court Yard and break her leg. The lease on Stainswick Farm is due for renewal.

No 61. Date. 15th October 1818. This is the longest letter containing 4,600 words. A large part of the subject is the changes that have been made as a result of him attending Vestry meetings in the village and the Poor Rates. He also had cause to make his displeasure known at the actions of Mrs Berens, the Vicar's wife. There is much discussion about the local labourers employed by the Parish and the rates that are paid. Some philosophical thoughts by GM in that we are now in the 19th century, and does Lord Barrington and the Beckett Estate have to subsidise up everything?

No 62. Date. 28th October 1818. He is sorting the lease of Stainswick Farm out with Mr Oddie the Steward of Magdalen College. Some small amount of talk of agricultural matters. GM is impressed with Lady Effingham, her views and her character in general. A note attached from William Crowdy.

No 63. Date. 2nd November 1818. Talk of fields and rents on properties. Mr Heath is building a new Public House at Longcott. The change in the Poor Rates will see a large decrease in the amount of money paid by the estate. The cost of repairing Lady Effingham's house. (SHS Note. Documentary evidence confirms this is the King & Queen Pub.)

No 64. Date. 12th November 1818. More general talk of things agricultural and crops, especially the crop called Tares. GM is also very excited about the introduction of Cattle about to be sent to Beckett by Lord B.

No 65. Date. 17th November 1818. Details on Magdalen College and Stainswick Farm lease, and other matters generally on rent and agriculture.

No 66. Date. 28th November 1818. General notes by GM on rates, rents and lets on the estate. He bemoans the lack of skill among farmers with regard to their treatment of trees and timber.

No 67. Date. 10th December 1818. A short list concerning the rent of Stainswick Farm. Details of trees and timber on the estate that have been sold or are about to be sold. GM has tried to persuade Thomas Wilson to leave his house and move in to another one. But he refuses to move and has twice tried shoot GM. He is now in Reading Jail. Lady Effingham is making a nuisance of herself.

No 68. Date. 13th December 1818. Observations about Mr Woodroffe. The Cattle have arrived and have presented quite a spectacle to the villagers.

No 69. Date. 19th April 1821. Written by GM from Abingdon in response to a problem that has occurred with the Beckett Estate Accounts involving James Fidel. Highly likely the recipient is Robert Dawson, the new Steward. It's at the end of the letter GM describes the bad situation he is in, but it lacks detail of how it happened. There appears to be a page missing.

Further research has enabled the addition at the end of the letters of
'George Merryweather – The Conclusion.' The explanation of where he came from and
where he ended his days.

The Letters of George Merryweather
Steward to Lord Viscount Barrington and the Beckett Estate 1815 – 1821
From the Barrington Collection Papers at the British Library, London
Ref: ADD -MS 73758

Letter No 1

George Viscount Barrington to George Merryweather
Sedgefield, Rushy Ford
11th December 1814

Sir

I am sorry to find by my friend Mr Hollingsworth that you have not got out of your difficulties and I also learn from him that you are not indisposed to undertake the office of Steward to any Gentleman's landed property. I cannot positively undertake to appoint you to that situation because the interference of others may interpose a bar which I cannot get over but without positively binding myself to any engagement I will just throw out to you the following idea which if you accept to or decline must be under ... of secrecy until I disclose it.

By the death of my two older brothers I am now in possession of the title and estate of my family. The estate consists of about 2700 acres of rich land in Berkshire 75 miles from London principally dairy ground. It has within the last two or three years been under the management of a very able honest, intelligent man with whom I have every reason to be satisfied but he lives thirty miles from the estate and has the management of other great concerns so that the emolument of the situation can be no great object to him and indeed his acceptance of the situation was rather considered as a favour conferred upon the Trustees who had the management of the property. I also meditate laying out as far as

ten thousand pounds in building a Mansion House the plan of which I am already in possession of. The estate is pretty well timbered, the Steward says sufficient oak timber can be cut upon the estate without interfering with ornamental wood, to supply the wood of that description that will be wanted for the purpose. Now if you think yourself equal to the management of this property and to supply the place of a Clerk of the Works to the building being put in possession of the workman's plans I shall make no difficulty in acceding to the salary mentioned in your letter to Hollingsworth. But though I have the highest opinion of your integrity yet in a concern of this magnitude and from the unfortunate circumstances in which you have been involved I should not feel myself justified in employing you unless you could procure security to the amount of four thousand pounds. Let me have an early answer to this proposal to which if you accede I will come to a final determination very soon and the situation will be open at Lady Day next.

I hope Mrs Merryweather and the children are well

I am sir

Sincerely Yours

Barrington

PS. Constant residence at the neighbouring village within half a mile will be required and the estate is so compact that you will have no occasion for a horse. I may perhaps occupy a small farm which will require your superintendence.

Letter No 2

London 15th December 1814

No 4 Tavistock Street

My Lord

I am honoured by your letter of the 11th inst. which I have received this forenoon on my return from a journey.

I sincerely congratulate your Lordship on your succession to the title and estate of your noble family, and I hope it will please God that your Lordship shall have health to enjoy those distinctions many years.

My Lord. I have read your letter over and over again, scarcely exciting my senses, for surely nothing but the most astonishing working of providence and the goodness of your Lordship could have proposed in my behalf, an employment so congenial and delightful to my mind.

My Lord, if this should take effect which your Lordship designs for me, it will not only be the most pleasant thing in which I could be engaged, but it will confer advantages by a kind of side wind of the very first import to my family. If adversity had not overtaken me it is highly probable certain of my elder children in due time, would have formed alliances in some of the most valuable commercial families in this city, who are acquaintances of long standing valuables, not only on account of their opulence but also on account of their nice conduct and the estimation in which they are held by the public. Were I reduced to accept of an employment purgatory in its nature I fear these fair prospects of my children might be blasted. As they bear the image of their mother in their countenance and largess participated of the goodness of her expectation the favour of their friends is greatly towards them, and I am sure their father coming into the service of your Lordship will more than secure them in the present estimation of their friends. What an important matter as it relates both to the advancement and the happiness of my children. But when in addition to this, I contemplate the joy it will yield to her who has been the most steadfast and tender friend to me in all my afflictions, when she shall learn

that I am in the service of your Lordship, my spirits are overpowered with gratitude to Heaven.

I am sure my Lord, if you had sat down to study and cause not enjoyment for the remainder of my life, you could not have brought together a sweeter assemblage of delectable employment than you have presented to me in your letter. The superintendence of a compact, fertile, grazing and well wooded estate, the direction of a small farm, the erection of a mansion house and the culture of the ornamental grounds, present objects perfectly fascinating to the imagination, and in the management of which I believe I shall find myself quite at home.

In the building of the mansion house, I trust, by my presence, to save your Lordship some thousand pounds, as well as to see that it is on firm fabric. I shall fully understand the plans which your Lordship speaks of, and I am familiar with the sawing of timber, and the execution and admeasurement of whatever relates to buildings, having never at any time done these things by defectation. If the workmen deceive my observation I will freely forgive them.

It shall be the study of my life to cultivate and enlarge the interests of your Lordship in what may fall under my superintendence, and at the same time to render your name honoured and beloved by a happy tenantry for I know right well both these objects can be combined. I cannot question but the security you request will be readily obtained. There is something so very flattering to my hopes in the exactation of this delightful employment that I positively tremble lest it should prove an illusion. But if it should please the wonderful goodness of God that I should thus become the servant of your Lordship, it will there remain with me to approve my attachment and fidelity to your Lordship, and to realise with the affectionate partner of my life, all that is so well described by Dr Cotton in his "Fril side." What a blessed termination of all our sorrows!

I am my much honoured Lord

Your Lordship's most obedient and obliged servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 3

London 23rd December 1814

My Lord

I have your honoured favour of the 20th instant and I entreat your Lordship to believe that my heart overflows with love and gratitude, if I may be allowed to say it without presumption.

When the Grand Day of assemblage shall arrive, then your Lordship will receive the remuneration of your surprising goodness to me and my family for I am since it can never be repaid by my poor services in this world.

By today's post I have written to a relation in the country requesting the security which is required, and if he comply with my request, your Lordship, on enquiry, will be quite satisfied as to his responsibility. Perhaps the constitutional timidity of this relative, may prove an obstacle to my expectation, but in matters of pecuniary obligation, I do consider it a duty to make to those of my own blood, and then, if they fail me, I can apply to friends who will not. It is very probable this gentleman will take two or three days to deliberate, before he write me. Ten to fourteen thousand pounds has yet to arrive to me by inheritance the major part of it being an entailed landed estate, proceeding from my maternal grand father and laying a few miles from Stokesley in Yorkshire. There is a good mansion house on this estate for so trifling an estate as it is.

I am pleased to learn it is your Lordship's intention to be in town next month as I shall then have the pleasure to see you.

Meanwhile, I have the honour to be

Your Lordships most obliged and obedient

George Merryweather

Letter No 4

London 28th December 1814

Dear Sir

I duly received your favours of the ... *missing* ... the 17th instant, and I am extremely obliged by the kind offices of your friendship. It yields me singular satisfaction to acquaint you that I believe they will be attended with the most perfect success. I have a letter from Lord Barrington nearing the date 11th instant in which he discloses to me the views he entertains in my favour. I am enjoined by his Lordship to secrecy for the present, therefore I cannot divulge the subject of his communication, but thus much I can say, that if his Lordship's intentions towards me be brought into effect, I am the most fortunate man upon earth. My poor back no longer tossed midst the rough surges of the Baltic waves, but safely anchored in a sea of glass. The kind appointment Lord Barrington has in prospect for me is so perfectly congenial to all within me, and points out to such halcyon days, that the very thought of it is almost fit to unsettle my judgement. I must not indulge myself any farther on this matter lest I should unwittingly betray his Lordship's injunction of secrecy, but I could not in cool silence receive such friendly intentions as you send without being changeable with ingratitude.

I am grieved to perceive what an expensive correspondent I am to you, and it is a sad consideration that it is convenient for me to have it so, but I hope there will now be a quick termination of this necessity.

Present my remembrance in the best manner to Mrs Hollingsworth and believe me to be sincerely

Your obedient friend and servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 5

London 2nd January 1815

My Lord

Today on my return from Dorking where I have been to spend the Xmas holidays at the country residence of a friend, I have the pleasure to send a letter from the relation I named to your Lordship in the matter of security.

He immediately consented to become bound for a handsome portion of the four thousand pounds, and he says he would write the following day to and the relative to do the same.

As this is a voluntary offer, I see that his heart is in the business. Their correspondence with each other being by cross-country roads and at a considerable distance, some days must elapse before I can be informed of the arrangement agreed upon, but I am pleased to believe that whatever my relations may determine, my friends will readily meet the deficiency.

With great respect

I am you Lordship' most obedient servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 6

London 13th January 1815

Mr Lord

I have always been at ease in my mind with respect to the security named by your Lordship, being persuaded my friends would meet even of more considerable sum had it been necessary, but I wrote your Lordship that in the first instance I would make application to my relations.

I have been partially successful and may probably succeed altogether with them.

My intercourse with some of my relations has been discontinued for so great a length of time that we are almost personal strangers to each other. In my application to them I act under the direction of my Father who resides at Darlington and who as he sees fit, advises me to write to them. These correspondences consume time.

As soon as I know the pleasure of these my kinsmen (whatever may be the result of their decisions) I can then give your Lordship the names of my sureties.

I hope your Lordship still entertains the intention of being in Town this month. My residence, when I am at home with my family, is at Pendleton, a village in the precincts of Manchester.

Your Lordship and my new employer, and your Lordship' domain at Beckett House, have so fastened on my mind, I can think of nothing else. I cannot return home without having a view of your Lordship's estate at Shrevenham.

Letter No 7

Shrivenham 24th April 1815

My Lord

I wrote your Lordship on the 28th March from the Haig near Leeds and on the 12th Instant from this place. Mr Davis came here on Thursday last, he called on me with Mr Crowdy junr in the evening and I was twenty minutes with him at the Inn on Friday morning. He proposed leaving Shrivenham before dinner, but was detained by the rain, as I understand, until Saturday morning.

I requested he would leave me the latest Rent-roll (which includes the recent changes of land which have taken place with some of your Lordship's tenants); also the maps of the Estate and the accounts of arrears of Rents etc due to your Lordship. Mr Davis says he will send me these papers. In truth without these necessary documents I cannot move. When I get them I will set about to know the history and state of each farm and field. I will take a stock of the wood growing and felled, and its present value in money. I would have written to your Lordship on Friday, immediately after my interview with Mr Davis, but I thought it better to defer writing till this morning when I should have it in my power to transmit the method I have adopted for keeping the weekly account of labour at Beckett, and which could not be made up until the men's wages were paid on Saturday night.

The assessed Tax Paper is also inclosed for your Lordship to fill up.

When I came to Beckett I thought to have found the south front of the Mansion at liberty for your Lordship's residence, as it was understood to be quitted by the gentleman residing there on Easter Tuesday, and I had planned to have the Library and the brown Parlour adjoining it as an appendage to that portion of the Mansion for your Lordship's accommodation. On finding that part of the Mansion still occupied, and learning from William Hedges that a house at Watchfield with eight acres of good land was to be taken for £40 to £50 a year, I thought this part of the Mansion which I had proposed to occupy

myself could be adapted as an occasional residence for your Lordship and connected with the Library and the brown Parlour as it is called, would form no bad accommodation, seeing the servants could have bed rooms at Mr Hedges. But instead of asking £40 or £50 a year for the house at Watchfield they asked £100 a year. Not feeling myself justified in going to so considerable a rent, I have now taken for my house that part of the Mansion which I before named to your Lordship and which ... not suitable for the family of your Lordship as a constant dwelling, will when you are here for a month or two be far better than your residing at an Inn during the continuance of your Lordship at Beckett. My family will find quite sufficient accommodation in Mr Hedges house when Mrs Merryweather, myself and the older part of the children will have as good rooms as we could wish for, and the younger children will be very happy with Mrs Hedges in her sitting room. I intreat your Lordship will fall in with this proposal for I should be ashamed to go into the village were your Lordship and my Lady Barrington to be resting at an Inn within your own domain while I within a stone's throw was reposing in your Lordship's own Mansion House. This must never be my honoured Lord. Besides it would subject me to the witticisms and smart sayings of all the wags in the neighbourhood. They would say, "If Mr Steward begin this way how will he end. " I really do not find nerve to brave the indelicacy that would be in this case, therefore whether your Lordship accepts my proposal or decline it, I should in my own defence be obliged to go to Mr Hedges so long as your Lordship was at Beckett or ... Shrivenham. Moreover, your Lordship would incur no taxes or window money at Beckett this year, nor would you become subject to the heavy expenses which a nobleman is expected to endure while he abides at an Inn. In this packet your Lordship will find a plan of the apartments which constitute my present residence in your Lordships Mansion. To diminish the taxes, the lower cellar and the attics are excluded by partitions of brick and plaster. Your Lordship's Library and Parlour during your absence from Beckett will be accessible only to myself. I do not know what furniture your Lordship may have at Beckett, but my dwelling will be fitted up and furnished to your hand. If your Lordship anticipated divers visits to Beckett and a residence in the modern part of the Mansion, some additional furniture will be requisite. Whether such furniture need be laid in at present or afterwards your Lordship will determine.

I send a catalogue of the furniture of Col. H. John which is to be sold this week

I hope your Lordship will expedite the completion of the map of Beckett Estate now in the hands of Mr Jennings of Evershott.

Signature missing

Letter No 8

Beckett 13th July 1815

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 11th instant with the books accompanying it, for which I am much obliged to your Lordship. I am glad my Lady Barrington and your Lordship find firmness to support your very severe loss. A more glorious victory to sooth such an affliction never presented itself.

The occasion of my writing your Lordship is to request your Lordship's instructions how I am to act with Mr Lulwyche of Wantage the surveyor of the assessed taxes.

This man is an ardent tax gatherer of great notoriety in his district. Beckett estate being long in trust and having no resident steward has laid open to his rapacity. He leans to the surcharges at Beckett which have seldom been appealed against and he is very reluctant to give up the income he has received from them. To contend his tenacity I have been at Faringdon four times and the final opposition is to be made there the 19th instant. At this meeting of the magistrty his claim will be confirmed or superseded. Mr Davis says he has no claim. I am fully of the same opinion and this is the state most of certain of the magistrates. Mr Loveden and Mr Mills I am told think otherwise. Your Lordship derives no income or advantage whatever from the property assess and subsequently surcharged, yet under the circumstance this man Lulwyche is fixing an expense on your Lordship of forty to fifty pounds per year.

Your Lordship is a far better judge than I am how far it may be well to write Mr Loveden and Mr Mills by return on this subject. If Mr Beanings could be persuaded to attend on the 19th I judge Mr Lulwyche can be made to abandon his intentions or feel very uncomfortable under them, for I think I work with great good humour with playfulness and ease make him very small in the estimation of those who have hitherto contemplated him. The objects surcharged and the house and gardens held by Henry Moulding - the house occupied by Mr Hedges - the Wellington Wood - the Wood which Lulwyche cannot describe nor say where it lies and Canfield's farm at Bourton which he persists at £180 a year although it is only £80. I am anxious to receive your Lordship's directions how to act in the event of the magistrates confirming this man's intentions.

I propose to write your Lordship shortly on other matters ... while I am pleased to believe that your Lordship's estate here is improveable in almost every farm wherein an estate can be improveable - neglect on one hand and encroachment or imposition on the other hand, absolve a fair portion of its income - Even the arithmetic of Mr Barnes' valuation is ... The acres, roods and perches of each field at so much per acre is wrong cart. I believe the balance of errors in this instance will be £50 a year in your Lordship's favour, exclusive of the arrears on this lead. The account must have been drawn out by some very junior assistant of Mr Barnes'. Mr Barnes has never revised it. The statement passed from Mr Barnes to Mr Crowdy. Mr Crowdy Far never revised it. It has passed from Mr Crowdy to Mr Davis. Mr Davis has not had license to attend to it. The house property is still more careless and the quit rents are worse than either of the farms. There are several houses belonging to your Lordship for which no rent has hitherto been filed or received, and of which property there is not the slightest record. I am so selfish as almost to rejoice at all this disorder, in as much as it fully justifies your Lordship in appointing a resident steward. In all towns some land is wanted for accommodation, where the price hardly becomes an object. This town has no accommodation of this nature. Your Lordship can very well oblige the public to an extent of a hundred acres at double the present rent and be cheap enough to, in the intentions of the persons accommodated. The labourers and all going on right, and there is now something like value received for the wages paid. I have agreed with the Surveyor of the Roads to occupy our labourers in winter. The town will allow them six shillings a week and on

condition they are employed on the roads contiguous to Beckett House, your Lordship will allow them four shillings a week. The sums which have hitherto been squandered and dissipated to enrich the vehicles through which they have passed to the floor will be directed into the channel and the charity will appear to all clear, unequivocal and intelligible.

I have been interrupted many times and am pressed for time to save the post, which is the apology I have to offer for a hastily written letter.

I am my Lord your Lordship's obedient servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 9

Beckett 28th August 1815

My Lord

I received the rents on the 11th Instant and your Lordship's letter of the 19th Inst came to hand only on the 13th. Not knowing what your Lordship's pleasure might be and fearing of keeping the money in the house, I placed it in the Faringdon Bank and the day after I received your Lordship's instructions (Monday 14th) I remitted two thousand pounds to Morland & Co in a Draft of Faringdon Bank at 20 days on spoons. Atwoods & Co desiring Mssrs Morland & Co to get it immediately accepted and then advise your Lordship of the receipt. Divers rents and arrears have yet to be received but I do not consider them in jeopardy and certain of the rents are not receivable till Michaelmas. Johnson and Butler and Canfield have paid no rent and King has paid only in part, but all of these rents will be paid ere long. Johnson & Butler at Michaelmas will be under a very different arrangement and properly contracted and I conceive this must be the case with King very shortly. Their management is careless and slovenly in the extreme effecting the

ruin of the Land & Buildings and ruin of themselves. This will be very visible to your Lordship when you receive a detailed report of the condition of each field and building.

Many of the tenants have brought in bills of expenses which were incurred before I came to Beckett or since I came here on order, as they say, from Mr Davis before I came, and which have subsequently received their completion. I defer settling these accounts until I see Mr Davis and I postpone this interview until I am prepared to bring every matter under consideration which can be desirable. This will be when I have got an exact account of the state of each field and building and when each outstanding bill against your Lordship is brought in.

Mr Ward the Clerk of the Commissioners of Income Tax at Faringdon and one of the Faringdon Bankers has engaged that I shall have a meeting of two Magistrates before Lulwyche can close in with his surcharge. I have deferred writing to your Lordship only by reason of Ward having been daily affected from the Isle of White where he has been and of Mr Lovenden's return home. Mr Ward proposes Mr Lovenden to be one of the magistrates seeing I acted in the appeal day on Mr Lovenden's instructions. Ward is one of the Faringdon Bankers.

I am yet without any answer from Mr Winter.

Mr Berens accompanied by two of the chief parishioners lately called on me to say what would your Lordship please to give on account of the Waterloo subscription. I said it was very probable your Lordship would meet this subscription at Sedgefield but I would name the application to your Lordship. They delay forwarding the subscription to London until I can communicate your Lordship's pleasure in this case.

Mrs Gerring and Mr Canfield have been buried within these ten days. Mr Canfield's house and also his land will be sold. The land is about five acres. It may be desirable to purchase the land but I earnestly intreat your Lordship not to purchase the house. It will never pay you 2.5 percent. I will engage the land will pay 4 to 5 percent.

In a former letter I named to your Lordship that little or no land here was let for convenience. This is an oversight. I am now regulating. I believe this adjustment alone will pay my stipend and will be little felt by any tenant at this time holding lands. On the rent day, the arithmetical errors handed down from Mr Barnes in his valuation was ... acceded to. They agreed £50 a year. The past week. The rents have been increased in a few small translations £50 a year to the comfort and advantage of all parties. A house and piece of ground which has hitherto been £6 a year is now £20 - another which was £13.10s is now £29. Carter's farm of 13 acres at Fernham is improved now there's one third in rent to an unexceptional tenant. I let nothing dear, it is all yet cheap enough, and the incoming tenants are good and conceive themselves much obligated. The advantage is quite reciprocal. A Lime Kiln is now built and we can shortly furnish the country with Lime at 3 pence per bushel less than they can be furnished else where. A good profit will be left to your Lordship, and even our own Lime will cost us about half the price it has hitherto cost this estate. I hope another Lime Kiln will be required to supply the demand of the country and if this thing meet my expectations your Lordship will be served in your interests far beyond what such a trifling concern may seem to imply. Most of the farm houses are in a shameful state of dilapidation and will cost a large sum of money to take them out of their ruinous state. This disbursement however shall pay your Lordship 7 to 10 percent interest, including the value of your Lordship's timber. Mr Barrington Price called on Saturday. He requested to have Fish & Game while he continues on a visit in this neighbourhood. I expect your Lordship's instructions mean while the game and fish he requires goes to him. Mr Statham had a sale of his furniture on Friday last. I understand he leaves this neighbourhood for Dorsetshire tomorrow. He expressed himself much obliged to your Lordship for repairing his broken window and he cheerfully accepted the boon (*old English = favour*). I thought it well to take at a valuation certain fail ranges for which if torn down would have disfigured the mansion. They are cheap enough for any subsequent purpose. Herewith is the deportation for the Game Keeper.

All is right at Beckett and every thing goes on well. Mr Berens read me your Lordship's letter so far as respected the new road. I concur entirely in your Lordship's treatment of that subject. I was delighted with the manner in which you met the childish fastidity of a

magistrate unacquainted with business who professing every desire to ... your Lordship, ties his hands and feet together that he ... *missing* ..

I forgot the gentleman's name - I write in great haste

I am my Lord

Your Lordship's most obedient servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 10

Beckett 29th September 1815

My Lord

I am favoured by your Lordship's letters of the 1st and 22nd Instant. I stand reprov'd in the matter of the newspapers. I neglected to take the freedom with Lord Lascelles name which I had done before from inadvertently being called upon at the period when the post man leaves Beckett by divers persons, and in the haste of directing those papers, I forgot the franking of them. While I am speaking of the papers I beg to state the course of their not being regularly sent from Beckett, your Lordship does not want the Oxford Paper to come at the news of the day, and the local information will make little difference to your Lordship whether it be a day or two sooner or later. But the local knowledge is to be obtained by the advertisements may be of much value to me and have indeed been of some, as it brings me acquainted with what is going forward in the neighbourhood where I reside and I have not always leisure to go immediately through all the advertisements.

I have on the table before me a rough copy of the operations in detail since my coming here, which I finished the day before yesterday. I intended to have sent you a fair copy of this statement by today's post, but I have been broken in upon so frequently and on

matters so favourable to your Lordship's interest, that I have thought the delay consequent on these engagements of comparatively little ...

The account I have named will be sent off in the course of a few days. I have begun on a large sheet of paper that I may touch upon the summary of this account if I have opportunity before post time. Farmer Bowles has to call on me in the intention to effect and exchange of a piece of land with his neighbour, Farmer Wilson (late Mr Johnson) which if effected to the satisfaction of both these tenants will increase your Lordship's rent in this instance about £30 a year. Mr Wilson has agreed to the exchange. The quantity of land is nearly 30 acres.

The occasion of my writing by this post is to say that after some chaffering with the late Mr Canfield's representative, I have prevented with him to make your Lordship an offer of a field belonging Mr Canfield containing nearly four acres which lays at the town end and which is surrounded by your Lordship's ground and is very desirable property to your Lordship. I can let it without difficulty at four guineas an acre, and if in grass at four pounds. There are already six competitors for it, everyone of whom (if they do not buy this) will be dependent on your Lordship for a piece of ground for convenience. This ground rests in offer to your Lordship at £100 an acre. It will certainly sell for more by auction, and of this Mr Berens is well persuaded. He thinks it ought by no means to be missed. The farms here will be more than sufficient for the payment of it, if your Lordship should buy it, and wish to sell it again, I will engage a good profit shall arise out of the bargain. I have let 17 acres of arable land adjoining it at four guineas an acre and 87 acres of pasture land at £5 an acre and three pounds a year more as interest for the money laid out two years back for a small feeding shed. This was the ground late by Mr Canfield at the town end at 48s per acre and £3 for the grass land. The tenants are unexceptionable.

The other circumstances which call on me to write by this post is the following. I let the arable land of Canfield's which I have just named to a person at £5 an acre and a Barn in the village at £8 a year. He also took a dwelling house with very convenient appendages at £15 a year. This man at present takes land at £6 an acre and he pays £17 a year for a dwelling house and premises not half the capacity of the house which I let him, and by

no means so advantageously situated for his business. The house this man now occupies belongs to Mr Killard's wife's brother. It is generally understood that Mr Killard has no mortgage on this house but this may be erroneous. Be it as it may, Mr Killard has told this man he was a great fool to take either the land or the house and he so worked on the man's mind as to dissuade him standing to his agreement. I yesterday relet this property to this man (knowing we had plenty more to dispose of in the same way) at a considerable reduction of rent. Half measures in a plain case are never good for any thing. I have been a good deal plagued with officious interferences which I have put to one side with as much good nature as I can muster. But there must be a stop put to this kind of procedure and this is a case framed and cannot do for the very purpose.

This morning I wrote to Mr Killard in substance, that in consequence of his interference, I had found it efficient to relet the property to Mr Thos Rich at a reduced rate, and that he had taken a very lively and sound part in frustrating me in the line of my duty, that I had no intention either to discharge him (Mr Killard) from his farm, nor to take one single field out of his possession, but that I in the conversation which he and I must have on Thomas Rich's matter, I did think it expedient we should have it under a notice of quittance in as much as I intended the abatement I had felt it expedient to make Mr Rich in his rent to be added to his (Mr Killard's) whereas to the capability of bearing it there could be no doubt. With this letter I sent a notice of quittance. Last evening I met with Mr Berens in my walks. I told him my intention and he said he thought it was very fair. Mr Killard was groom to Mr Barrington Price and most likely was a deserving servant in that capacity. He married a favourite servant either of Mr B. Price or the Major (I don't know which) and he acts under the supposed protection of this interest. I have never before given him to see that I was aware of his officiousness but this being a plain palpable case, I would avail myself of it and it will do much good. My hands will not only be strengthened but the ridicule and laugh of the neighbourhood be against him and my ground will be made level with advantage to myself. I would not recommend the reasons but that I know there is plenty of room to do it without interfering on his real comforts.

Farmer Bowles and his son have been with me three hours negotiating. I have obtained my point that I was obliged to be alright in my conclusion as the poor boy is out of all

patience. The particulars which I shall shortly hand to your Lordship will in summary be an improved rent of the following particulars

The Garden per annum	£20
Dog Kennel	£10
2 Cottages	£8
Land at Shrivenham (lately occupied)	£50
Ditto Mr Willoughby	£30
Gunter	£10
Cottage by Hughes	£5.17.0
Wharf at Longcott	£2.0.0
Wilson & Bowles Exchange	£30.0.0
Houses	£15.0.0
A. Canfield	£14.0.0
Errors in Carting of Rent by Mr Barns	£50.0.0
Killards interference	£19.17.6
Sand in the Parish by subcontracting, then in cause of Charity so called still leaving up	
Lordship £100 a year to pay the poor	£0.12.9
Profit by Sale of Lime	£200.0.0
Ditto by Bricks	£100.0.0
Total	£651.17.3

I believe Lime and Bricks amount of increase triple to what ... *missing* ...

we can buy Lime for 4/- per bushel. It has hitherto cost as buying 1/- per bushel. 1/- short measure and 1/- carting - altogether 15/-per bushel. The public receive it 25 percent cheaper than they have been accustomed to pay for it. Waiting your Lordship's speedy answer to Canfield's proposal in the case of the land and trusting your Lordship will stand by me in the case of Killard if my statement be clearly maintained. I remain in great haste to send the post

My Lord, Your Lordship's most obedient servant
George Merryweather

Letter No 11

Beckett 31st October 1815

My Lord

I was favoured with your Lordship's letter of the 5th instant and in consideration of your Lordship's permission, I purchased Canfield's land and immediately let it at five pounds an acre. The house is not yet sold. They had a bidder at £810 but it was bought in at £900. I doubt whether they can now obtain £800. Mr Berens was desirous your Lordship should buy this house. I wished him to go through the whole of the house and he would see what a considerable sum it would require to make it barely comfortable. He told me yesterday he had been over the house and that it was his opinion it would cost £400 to make it passible. I remember saying to your Lordship it would take £300 to do this after such an expense was incurred. I should gently doubt whether now more than £30 rent could be had for it. Such property as this can hardly deserve your Lordship's attention.

I can now for the first time give your Lordship a current account of our Lime transactions as the first boat load of coals was finished this morning and I deferred writing your Lordship until I could state the cost of the Lime with perfect accuracy. When I first visited Beckett in March last to meet Mr Davis, on seeing the estate abounded with valuable Lime Stone, and that the Berks & Wilts Canal run through the ground, I formed a strong hope that we could not only supply the estate itself with Lime at a cheaper rate, but make it a source of revenue. How far the first part of my expectations are fulfilled your Lordship will soon perceive, and what passport there is of the latter, your Lordship will form your own opinion. The Kiln we have built is on a small scale containing only 30 quarters or 240 Winchester Bushels. In an experiment I did not wish to commit myself to any great extent. This Kiln burns 340 Bushels of Lime per week and 37 Bushels of Lime ashes. It will do so the year round if there be demand for it. When I came to Beckett we paid a shilling a Bushel for our Lime at Coxwell and three halfpence carting to Beckett. The measure which purports to be Winchester measure runs out when delivered at only 48 Bushels for what is carted and charged 80 Bushels. Each 68 Bushels of Lime coast when delivered here £4.10 or 16d per Bushel nearly as possible 5 60 over 68 ... complete

outside cost of your Lordship's Lime is 3.5d per Bushel and the Kiln although out of sight of the house and in no possible way offensive to it or anything is so near that one good three horse team could draw on a thousand bushels a day to Beckett House if required. Mr Whitworth the Engineer to the Berks & Wilts Canal assures me it is by much the strongest and best Lime to be had on the whole line of the canal. We are now supplying the Canal Company an order of 2000 Bushels at 9d. The orders I have got on hand unsupplied exceed 3000 Bushels. The difference of Lime at the former and the present cost will be nothing short of £2000 in an erection on Mr Atkinson's plan. This Kiln is so constructed that we can work it the year round, let the weather be as it may. There is a [merit] attending the construction of the Kiln of which I am a little flattered and much gratified when this Kiln was building. I had never seen nor heard of a Lime Kiln being covered over the top to protect it from the elements in stormy weather, and to compress or other confine the smoke to a given column so as not to be offensively blown about in every direction by the wind. I told the masons at the time they were building this Kiln, that as soon as the mound of earth which surrounded it had acquired firmness and consistency, to admit of it, I would throw a wall round the platform of earth which was level with the top of the Kiln and put a roof over, thus protecting at once the Kiln from rain, wind and snow, and the man also at his work. Shortly after this I received the Farmers Magazine and the very first thing I opened upon was a drawing of the Close burn Lime Kilns with covered tops. But in this my thought is far more happy than that of Mr Monteath in as much as it is more simple less expensive and effectively protects the labourer from inclement weather with a fortnight's work of Lime stone before him. Round the top of the platform of earth which encompasses and supports the Kiln, and on the top of which the Lime burner and his family work, exposed on that elevation to every wind that blows, we have built a brick wall 9 inches thick and 6 feet high. It is 54 feet in circuit or 18 feet in diameter. We shall roof it with a conical roof with chimney in the centre of 1.5 feet on a side and proceeding about 18 inches or 2 feet above the top of the roof. This ... house has two doors at opposite parts of the circle, the one wherein for the Lime burner to wheel in the coal and the other his Lime stone. He gains his light by three windows which are inserted in the walls. The utility of this structure strikes and immediately on entering it on a cold day - and its gracefulness is manifest from whatever point of view it is seen. The best thing however concerning this Kiln is the profit arising from it. Were we never to burn Lime but in this one Kiln, I think there can be little doubt

but it could find constant custom for building purposes alone at 9d per bushel. But my views extend far beyond this Kiln your Lordship's Estate at Beckett contains inexhaustible quarries of the very best Lime stone and the Berks and Wilts Canal running within a furlong of them! Drop Lime to 7d a bushel and it will become the cheapest man... in a great extent of county around. I will pledge myself for its success and I hope if I live to the ordinary age of man or even a few years hence to see you Lordship's desire or revenue from this source equal to half the present rental of Beckett. I will by myself act to accomplish this. The Canal Company enter into my views. I have conferred with their committee on the subject. They will take off three fourths of their dues on the transit of Lime for manual for the encouragement of the canal trade which the burning of Lime will create. They themselves will give me as the preference in their own consumption. Mr Whitworth their Engineer and Mr Priestley the Clerk to the Canal Company second my views heartily and will promote the sale of Lime in every direction. Mr Priestley was long a neighbour of mine although we were not personally acquainted. Mr Whitworth is concerned in 13 Boats on the Canal and he also sells Coals. It is his interests in every respect to give an impulse to my objects in respect to Lime and to quicken the approach for that general consumption of Lime which I trust to effect. Mean while it may be well to get struck off a few hundreds of the chapter on Lime which we find in Brown. It admits of certain attention to make it take the minds of the farmers here. This pamphlet I would get introduced into all the book sellers shops in the whole district of Coventry where there was a moral certainty of our Lime being consumed. All this can be done with the greatest silence and order without any one appearing in at, or the circulations of their pamphlets having any conception that there is a particular motive for it, or that any one is concerned in the disposal of them for himself. Those persons who travel with publications ramble to all the farm houses scattered over the face of the county, might be furnished with a supply at a cheap rate. It is this delusion of the knowledge of the use of Lime on which I build my expectations of success to any great amount. Brown speaks of using so many 'Rolls of Lime to a Scotch acre.'" I cannot find any who can tell me what Scotch acre is in English measure. Mr Berens does not know. I am enquired of by the farmers as how to use this Lime in what quantities and all the details of the management of it from first to last. Perhaps Mr Davison would oblige me at an early opportunity with the best information he has on the subject. This Post man is going therefore I am told to wave the subject at this time. I will write your Lordship at an early opportunity on other

matters. I observe with attention the points contained in your Lordship's three last letters and I am governed by them although divers of them have not yet been noticed by me when writing to your Lordship. I am obliged to conclude myself.

My Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 12

Beckett 14th November 1815

My Lord

When I wrote you last I was cut short of what I proposed further to add by the Postman returning to Faringdon at an unusually early hour. He came to Shrivenham that morning before his accustomed time in consequence of a letter addressed to Mr Berens 'with great speed.' The letter announced Lady Courtenay to be extremely ill. Mr Berens set out for London immediately but I understand Lady Courtenay was dead before they arrived in Town.

What I would have written in continuance in my last letter (seeing my paper was nearly finished) would have been confined to the expression of my intention in respect to Lime burning next spring and instead of being at the expense of another Kiln, until we have full trial of the business I hope through the influence of Messrs Whitworth & Priestley obtained of the Canal Company the Kiln already built by them at Longcott Wharf for a term of three years without rent. If we use it we are to repair it which will occasion an expense of £10 to £12. Mr Priestley informs me this Kiln burns eighty bushels of Lime a day. The Canal Company are thus courteous to promote freight of coal and Lime on their Canal. Nor can they use this Kiln themselves without purchasing the Lime Stone off your Lordship at your own price. The Kiln in their hands is now on nullity and I dare say we

may have it in perpetuity rent free. However sanguine I may be as to the Lime made, I know before it can be brought up to my expectations much prejudice has to be subdued – time lost – and difficulties overcome, for agricultural people here move very slowly into any new measure – on their guards, no expense ought to be incurred until the call for it is decisively clear. My experience and also the part of life to which I have attained will I hope clear me of a mistake of short nature.

The next subject to which I would call your Lordship's attention is the shameful state of the buildings and the improvident waste of timber on this estate. Mr Davis was very sensible of this but he had not leisure to rectify these evils. He attempted it in the buildings but not being at liberty to attend to them in detail much abuse arose in the expense incurred by the additions and repairs of the farm houses and cottages. Each tenant get what workmen he chose to work – these workmen moved on plans of their own devising on changes of their own making and on measurements of their own guessing in. The sawyers cut the timber in that way which paid the sawyer best for his trouble – he then gave in his own measurement and charged 3.3 percent more than any other person was receiving. Their extravagances to which add the preparations charges of Lime at the Winchester Bushel and bricks at 50s a thousand will readily account to your Lordship for much expense when little appearance of improvement arose. Had Mr Davis been resident none of these evils would have existed. He was not resident and his many engagements and his judgement and his honesty making him every where in request. He felt himself obliged to admit vexations which he had not the time to remedy. Everything in this branch of expenditure seems as yet to be done but I am certain the ways and means to meet this expense and to be found amply in the timber which is rotting on the ground, or which from circumstances that I shall name, ought to be out done. Perhaps few persons can be more safely trusted with the felling of timber than myself from my extreme attachment to trees. Whatever gives beauty or grandure to the residence forms no part of the timber I have in view. It is timber scattered over the estate which like corn fully ripe is ready for the scythe. Timber which in similar circumstances has been receding from its best and hearty quality the last twenty years, arrives now in a state of decay. Timber which although not of large size has arrived at its maturity and will not improve and trees which admit of improvement in themselves but which over top and keep down trees of a less size adjacent to them that would soon more than

compensate for the tree felled if not over shadowed by it. The number of Pollard Trees on certain farms on this estate is shameful either to the present occupiers or their forefathers and predecessors. This occurs particularly on the farms of Mr Warren and Mr Williams. The capacity of this management speaks for itself and should be put a stop to directly. A decent number of Willow Pollards may remain to meet farming purposes but the numbers of fine Ash trees which have been intercepted and destroyed in their growth and value by being topped for firewood is grievous. These ugly stumps do now disfigure the estate. They have frustrated the object of revenue and ought immediately to be cut down. Their produce though small in comparison of what it ought to have been if brought to the market in the form of fine maiden trees is yet well worth consideration. In selecting trees for felling I connect to the best judgement and taste I possess, a person of perfect judgement this way I think it very possible to take down more timber than will repair the farm houses and cottages including every disbursement attending them with advantage to the remaining timber and without being missed as on some cases, I consult Mr Berens. There are now twenty one felling this timber. I wish the ground clear of the timber before the frosts are over that the farmers may in no inconvenience from the drawing off their lands in spring, and that the value of it may be in your Lordship's pocket without loss of time. The prime of it will sell to Navy contractors and the inferior will sell for home purpose, and a part will be preserved to perfect the repairs of the estate. This is a department in which I feel easy and in which I am sure I will not deserve your Lordship's censure nor that of any individual of your Lordship's family. Perhaps I cannot say the same of every tenant but if I attend in all cases to every inclination I should be of no service whatever to your Lordship. The arrears of rent are the next subject I present to your Lordship's attention. They will all be made forthcoming by Lady Day and not sooner. In securing these I have exercised great lenity - Lenity - not in the amount but the time. The folly of this made of precedence is obvious. In bad cases of this natural the object of interest is security. The next object is to accomplish this security with as little injury to the unfortunate party as possible and this will generally be found to be done the most effectually by giving sufficient time for the regular sale of his goods. What may be called a reasonable time for receipt of the monies of the purchasers of these goods. What may be called a reasonable time for payment of the purchasers is varied by circumstances. Money in this neighbourhood at this time is said to be very scarce. In the credit given at the sale of Mr Johnson we have been governed by this circumstance - no

money has yet been received but all is good lands with sufficient guarantee. The corn is taken by the incoming tenant, the value has yet to be adjusted by two arbitrators. The key is in over possession – its value is between £240 to £300. It hasn't been thought prudent hitherto to sell it. Mr Johnson's feelings might have been outraged by the price offered by the incoming tenant who for the good of the estate I am desirous should be the purchaser, but he persists in his must in common honesty to Mr Johnson, not have it. The winding up of Johnson's affairs has required great delicacy and diligence. In this fickle affair I believe I have acquired his confidence and that of his wife and family. I am sure I deserve it. Mrs Johnson is a most deserving and interesting woman and her children are like their mother. She has always been well in the consideration and the favour of the Bishop of Durham whose servant she was before she was married, I neither felt the dispositions nor the folly of going harshly to work with Johnson and if I had done so, the right ... which would have gone and been handed to the Bishop of Durham might have caused uneasiness and trouble. I shall now through my paper state more into Johnson's affairs. Butler's arrears will be in my possession by Xmas. This man deserves much ... and lenity. Canfield's concerns are in a train of settlement in the hands of a very judicious executor; but I have yet received no rent. All however is safe there.

The Post man has called and I am obliged to continue in three or four days. I will write your Lordship again proceeding in detail on those objects under my care, wherein your Lordship's interests are concerned. I will just add that Mr Berens was fixed fast, as I think with the new gallery. Himself and the architect ...*missing* ...House. The estimate is £150. The number of seats forty. Your Lordship can either confirm to my proposal or not as shall please you. If your Lordship do accede it, your interest will be £8 per cart. I can have the advance made elsewhere and your Lordship has it in your options to abide by my bargains or released. I said your Lordship would be £50 for this your Lordship must have the proprietorship of the front row of seats, or when the gallery was needed, as options of the same number of seats as the front row now contained in any situation or situations which your Lordship should choose. I have the honour of your Lordship letter of the 6th for which I thank you and the information is extremely useful. I will write again in three or four days. I am my Lord your Lordship's obedient servant –

George Merryweather

Letter No 13

Beckett 17th November 1815

My Lord

I wrote your Lordship on Tuesday last having stated to Lordship my views of the Lime burning. I am naturally led to the article of bricks which subject I shall very soon discuss. The bricks which supplied your Lordship's estate when I came here were bought at Little Coxwell. The price was 50s per thousand delivered at Beckett, namely 40s at Coxwell and 10s carting. Being burnt on the top of their Lime Kiln and with a fire of furze only, and the heat of which burnt the bricks having first to burn through a mass of Lime Stone before it could penetrate to the bricks above, the heat was too much expended before it came in contact with the clay, therefore the bricks were soft and were little better worth than for inside work if any could do without them. Our success in the Lime encouraged me to look out for clay of a species applicable for brick making. We had the good fortune to meet with a bed of clay five to six feet deep which appeared very likely for this purpose. I sent a cart of it to Cricklade to be tried there in the Kilns of Mr Durnel who makes nearly two million of bricks annually by contract for the Canal Company. The clay being of different degrees of strength at the top, middle and bottom of the bed we made three distinct divisions of it. The surface clay is too mild to form bricks of itself, the middle clay makes very good bricks, the bottom clay is too strong of itself, but does well when mixed with the surface clay. But the best bricks are constituted by a due mixture of the whole, so that these will cut to waste in this bed of clay. There will require no unnecessary digging. I have half a dozen bricks which were sent from Cricklade when burnt as specimens. These bricks can be burnt inclusive of every expense at 28s a thousand. The Kiln will be in a sequestered place out of sight almost and not more than a furlong from the Mansion House. It is in the first field of Farmer Perring's grounds near the water gate on the left hand in going to Beckett House. The Wellington Wood is just above it. A team of three horses with a stand cart would draw 12,000 bricks a day to the Mansion. These bricks as an object of sale can never be considerable. No more will be wanted this way than for the accommodation of a small district in the neighbourhood,

therefore I would not enter into a fruitless attempt to force a sale of bricks by a reduction of price, but charge 40s a thousand as they do at Coxwell and Faringdon for we shall not dispose of one brick less on this account. It is to be observed here that if no bricks were to be made with a view to serve the Beckett Estate we should with a view to the sale of Lime be obliged to burn some bricks in our own defence. At Coxwell they will not let them have Lime if they do not take bricks and visa versa they will not let them have bricks if they do not take Lime. It is to be presumed in this case that the Kiln People know that the parties applying for one or the other are at the time using both. When I have dismissed the subject of bricks I will just add that Mr Loveden's agent told me the other day that Mr Loveden burns his own Lime. He brings his Lime stones 25 miles by water carriage and the Lime stands him to ten pence a bushel when burnt.

The next thing I touch upon is an application made to me some time back concerning the proposed gallery in Shrivenham Church. Mr Berens who is intent on accomplishing this gallery, seems fast for ways and means. One day when I had gone over to Longcote and Coxwell to see the construction of the Lime Kilns there preparatory to the building of your Lordship's Kiln here, Mr Berens called at my house in company of Mr Pace the builder. He kept Mr Pace the greater part of the day and on return I found the plan of the proposed gallery. Mr Pace is under contract for the building of this gallery and his estimate is £150. I waited on Mr Berens the following morning and learnt from him the gallery was constructed to contain 40 seats. I felt no difficulty how to act promptly on this occasion because I knew I should be at no inconvenience by telling your Lordship have an option to accept or decline any agreement I might make with Mr Berens in this instance. I said it to Mr Berens, if the row of front seats was reserved for your Lordship and when the Gallery was built the option of selecting in any part of it seats equivalent in number and size to those contained in the front row in lieu of them would be £50 be an adequate compensation for giving your Lordship a perpetuity in those seats. Mr Berens said it would be accepted as such. I then said your Lordship would give it. If your Lordship consent to this agreement you secure probably the best pews in the church for the use of Beckett House, or I shall find no difficulty in letting their pay your Lordship 8 or £10 ... If it be a kind of property not thought desirable, I have an acquaintance who will take them off my hands at once. As I recollect when I had the plan in my possession I estimated the front row to contain about fifteen seats. I think it is for whether the

Gallery be proceeded with. I have heard nothing concerning it since that interview with Mr Berens.

I will now speak of Mr Canfield's matters so far as your Lordship's interest is connected with them. Your Lordship perhaps may recollect that on your visit here in June, I named to you Mr Canfield's having mentioned to me some supposed claim he would have on your Lordship's consideration in the event of his dissolution. He founded this claim on the improvement he said he had wrought on your Lordship's land while in his occupancy and which he had not yet held long enough to restore him the adequate remuneration. Mr Canfield died and although I never estimated Mr Canfield's claim beyond those which a good tenant always has on a good Landlord, I did consider his orphan family entitled to every indulgence that was consistent with your Lordship's interest. The Bourton land I was certain would be given up and I was also as presumptuously certain the family would retain the land at the town-end. But if the land at there were given up, it fell exactly within the scope of my views as to the land wanted for accommodation land, which I have before named to your Lordship. To induce this disposition on their part and to make it very acceptable to them I fell on the following measure. I must previously however inform your Lordship that Mr Canfield had a house of his own in the village which was let to one William Horne at £9 a year but which house would fall into your Lordship on Mr Canfield's death, he holding it on a reserved rent and he himself being the last life in it. Mr Canfield on his death bed sent for me and adjointed me to promise him that his children should have the occupancy of this house as tenants of your Lordship in preference to any others. This I readily promised him provided his family paid your Lordship the same annual rent that he himself now let it for to Mr Horne. Mr Canfield said this was very reasonable and so this point was adjointed. Some days after Mr Canfield's funeral I went with the uncle of the young people to inspect this house. We were both agreed nothing short of an entire rebuild could make this rough place fit for a milliners's shop which was the purpose for which it was wanted by the young women, Mr Canfield's daughters. But a rebuild was an expense I could by no means put your Lordship to nor indeed was it required or expected that I should. The young ladies were now quite at a loss. There was no other house in Shrivenham applicable to be come at. Here I must leave the miss' Canfield's before I can relieve them from this embarrassment to acquaint your Lordship there was a

house belonging your Lordship occupied by Joseph Hughes the parish clerk at £8.8s a year. This house was of far too large a capacity for Mr Hughes and his servants who composed the whole of his family and indeed they occupied only a corner of it leaving the other part which was no more then an unfinished shell unoccupied. Mr Hughes acceded to my proposal of giving up the larger portion of the house which was of no use to him if the part which he did inhabit were cleaned up and made decent for him with a suitable reduction of rent. This was agreed to. It was now in my power to offer Miss Canfield's that relief which they were distressed for. What I could now offer of Mr Hughes's house was far more desirable than Mr Horne's house and they could have it at precisely the same rent but still it wanted finishing and fitting up. The giving up the land at the town end was a ready concession for so desirable an object. The land at the town end was immediately let for an increased rent about £70 but through Mr Killard's interference I afterwards needed from nearly £20 of this which must be transferred to his farm if on good consideration it be thought expedient. Mr Hughes cheerfully pays five guineas now that he sees how comfortable his little cabin can be made. Miss' Canfield's consider themselves in clover in such a house as they occupy at only nine pounds a year. Horne who occupied the house Miss' Canfield was to have had at £9 a year considers his situation mended when next Lady Day he shall occupy the house and a close at £20 a year now held by Willoughby at £4 a year seeing when he returns late from Oxford on Saturday night he has an acre of land close to his house wherein to turn his house and Mrs Rich ' who has taken the house that Horne lives in at £15 a year and a barn contiguous to it at £8 a year, which hitherto has let for only 30s a year, tells all his neighbours that I am the best friend ever met with. This improvement in the rental of so small a portion of your Lordship's property here will justify a disbursement which I have made on the tenements now occupied by Miss' Canfield's and Mr Hughes of what I judge will appear about £60 when the items shall be put together. But even laying this money out I had an eye to the future improvement of the rent if Miss' Canfield's should marry or become otherwise settled sedulously avoided all their intreaties to give the house the external appearance of a shop by a kind of huge disproportioned bow window thing which they were desirous to have put up. With the assistance of a little ochre and Lime wash externally it is one of the prettiest houses in Shrivenham and if at liberty would readily let for five pounds a year more than the present rent. The weather being now broken up and the season for action suspended I shall have leisure to continue those

details if agreeable to your Lordship until you are made acquainted with what has been going here since I came and the motives for my proceeding. I received Anderson yesterday and sat up nearly all night reading him. He is quite to my purpose. I shall write on Monday or Tuesday in continuance if all be well, when I intend to state the nature of the disbursements here and the head of charities

I am my Lord your Lordship's humble servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 14

Beckett 20th November 1815

My Lord

I wrote to your Lordship on Friday communicating information concerning Brick working at Beckett, my treaty with Mr Berens relative to the new Gallery proposed by him to be erected in Shrivenham Church, and the terms on which the late Mr Canfield's family gave up the land they hold of your Lordship at Shrivenham.

I now submit to your Lordship a statement of the charities maintained by your Lordship on this Estate, as they stood at my arrival and I shall feel at my duty to point out certain regulations in the distribution of these charities which will leave them equally officious for the relief of the indigent poor and at the same time withdraw a considerable annual sum, which goes into the pockets of the Parish or which in some other way is altogether or in a considerable measure intercepted before it arrives at the Poor for whose use alone it can be designed. The disbursement on the head in its details in March last stood as follows;

Alms Persons, viz.

8 Persons inhabiting the Alms Houses

at £1.15s each per annum £14.0.0

Mary Barnard

Elizabeth Davis

Thomas Hill

Susan Jenner

Mary Mulcock

William Radaway

Charles Sly

Thomas Walters

Bread	Delivered by Wrighton the Baker to the Poor at Xmas	£5.13.9
Bull	Delivered by William Wilson to the Poor at Xmas	£15.0.0
Clothes	To Lady Barrington's Charity Girls	£12.0.0
Coals	To the Poor by Daniel Pound in Winter at 3d a bushel below the then Market Price until this donation be	£20.0.0
Flour, Bacon etc	Purported to be sold by William Fuce the Blacksmith at prime cost for which his remuneration was	£10.0.0

Labourers Paid to aged Labourers beyond their ability to earn;

Thomas Ackriel

William Lake

John Powell

William Radaway

These four old men have 10s a week each the year round, but their services are not of value, more than 8 months of the year, and then their services cannot be estimated at more than 6s per week each. Paid to them beyond their real earnings will stand thus viz.

8 months of the year at 4s per week each, and 4 months at 10s per week. £62.8.0

Betty Hollick

Elizabeth Sealey at 4s per week each during 4 months of the year when their services are useless		£3.10.0
School	For Lady Barrington's Charity Girls at Shrivenham	£8.0.0
School	Held on Sundays by Joseph Hughes	<u>£6.6.0</u>
Amount brought forward		£156.17.9
School	Held by Dickenson at Longcott	£3.0.0
Trotman	The late Game Keeper	£20.0.0
Trotman's Wife	For teaching poor children their letters	<u>£5.0.0</u>
		£184.17.9

Having placed this statement before your Lordship I beg to submit a few observations on certain of these charities tending to point out the abuse of them in some cases and their inefficiency in others to meet the object intended by them. I will then draw out a new plan which I think will meet all the proper objects intended by this and if your Lordship shall approve of it, it can be proceeded up. I will take the items of your Lordship's benevolence as I have arranged them on the other side of this sheet.

The 35s a year to each of the poor persons in the Alms Houses is a good charity and one that I am sure your Lordship would choose to continue. The Bread delivered by Mr Wrighton to the poor at Christmas comes lased with a heavy profit by the Baker. Mr Wrighton is a good natured decent man but all his operations of trade are heavily laid on with profit. In this case your Lordship's purse will not be spared. What I have remarked on, Mr Wrighton's bread applies with ten fold force to Mr Wilson's annual Bull. This will not bear thinking of. Your Lordship cannot have a worse vehicle of distribution. As it will be found your Lordship has been paying much in the name of Labour which in fact was nothing but poor rates and as perhaps a considerable amount must for some time be substantiated for a part of this burthen. I should propose that the Bull and the Bread be discontinued and I am the more inclined to this because the very distribution of the Bread and Beef opens another door of mismanagement in the way of favouritism when done by the Overseers of the Poor. Clothes to the poor girls is a good charity. My experience that way leads me to know that twice the number of girls can be as well

clothed for the same money or half the money saved in the clothing of these girls. The materials of which their clothes are fabricated should be had from Leeds and Manchester. They would not be more than a week on the road. Shop goods at Shrivenham are dearer than in London. It may however be a very delicate point to effect this saving. If Mr Berens who really devotes much of his time and attention to these children should misconstrue this saving as an interference on the part of the Steward and I would note that any displeasure should be engendered in Mr Berens mind against me, it is my duty to make the statement which I have made and on this ground only I have done it. The next item is Coals, £20 a year. Daniel Powell was appointed to deliver our coals in winter to the poor at 3 pence per cwt below the market price until the £20 was absorbed by those threepences. Eighty tons of coal would be required to do this. I named to Mr Berens that if the poor people would come to Beckett Lime Kiln every Monday forenoon between the hours of 9 and 1 they should be served with an unrestricted quantity of coals at 3 pence per cwt below the market price. They have done so these last two weeks. The poor are served and gratified and it costs your Lordship nothing. Mr Fuce, Blacksmith has for eighteen years been receiving ten pounds a year for selling his Bacon *** not at prime cost to the indigent poor as was intended but for a much higher price than any other shop in the town charged. Indeed I never knew a single instance where persons taken from that rank of life to be the vehicle of a charity ever vested faithfully to it. Scarcely anything of a trivial nature could have given more general satisfaction to the village than your Lordship suspending that payment on Mr Gerring's representation of the truth last June. This disbursement has died a natural and taking into contemplation your Lordship's name *** family I would not revive it in any other form at Shrivenham. The disbursement to the old men under the title of labourage occurs next. This has been a great oversight and is neither more nor less than a substitution of your Lordship's purse to meet the Poor Rates. One of these old men entered into the service of your Lordship's family after he was turned of sixty. The Parish has been called on to do their day duty to these men and your Lordship's munificence makes up the accustomed amount of their enjoyments. This charity although considerable is not a perpetuity, and from the great age of the objects, cannot be of long continuance. The same observations apply to the two old women, which apply to the old men. This regulation being founded in reason, goes better down with the Parish than I expected. The school for poor girls is a good thing, and also the Sunday School. The School at Longcott has for some time been a sinecure (the man

having no pupils,) and he himself not being a deserving object the stipend is discontinued and paid him the months under notice that it would be then discontinued. Thomas Trotman and his wife are both cripples and objects of commiseration. More than this I know nothing of them, nor what their pretensions may be on your Lordship's family.

Having made these observations on that head of disbursement which may properly be called Charity, I will submit it to your Lordship's consideration under that form I think it may thinly stand with full grace and justice to your Lordship seeing your family is not resident at Beckett, and that your Lordship's expenses this way near your immediate abode will always be considerable.

Alms Persons £14.0.0

Clothes to Charity Girls (this expense may produce the same effect for 6) £12.0.0

Labourers. Four old men at 4 shillings a week each is £41.12 from which deduct 35 shillings from Mr Radway as he receives that amount at the Alms Houses and the same paid to them per annum will be ... *missing*

Betty Hollick, Elizabeth Sealey will receive of the Parish £2. ... *missing*

five months in the year. This will leave to be paid them by ... *missing*

Barrington to complete their 4 shillings a week each ... *missing*

School ... for Girls ... *missing*

School ... held on Sundays ... *missing*

Thomas Hickman, the late Game Keeper ... *missing*

Trotman's Wife ... *missing*

This amount of £107.3s does certainly admit of an honest deduction of £6 a year .. *missing* in the instance of the girls clothing as I have before stated, and as old Thomas Ackriel has ... *missing*

who has that strength which his father wants and old John Powel has a ... *missing* of the younger labourers called Merrifield. I let these four men piece work ... *missing* by which means they receive equal wages, and while this mode can be ... *missing* your Lordship is relived from the payment of their 8 shillings a week

Now that the stormy weather has set in and reduced my ... *missing* ... to indoor work I shall with your Lordship's permission, continue to inform you on those subjects which have been entrusted to my care and direction. There is no postman today, but if I conclude immediately, I have an opportunity of sending this letter to Faringdon by a private hand.

I propose to write your Lordship again tomorrow, when it is my intention to say what has been done at the buildings and what is the increase of rent in which your Lordship finds your remuneration for this expense a remuneration your Lordship will think perfectly ample, and I am happy to behave cheerfully conceded to, because of the agreeable appearance the respective tenements have assumed on which has been externally expended.

I am my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servant

George Merryweather

Letter No 15

Beckett November 21st 1815

My Lord

I wrote to your Lordship on Monday with a statement of the disbursements at Beckett under the head of Charity. I propose in this letter to acquaint your Lordship of what has been done in the reparation of the buildings since I came here, the grounds on which each disbursement under the head has been incurred and the advantages arising from those operations, whether of a pecuniary nature or of whatever other kind. Instead of classing them at present under an alphabetical management as I shall do hereafter when the precise expense of each item shall appear, I will name them in the order they were provided in. The first building we begin with was the Joiner's shop and the shed

contiguous to it. This shop had neither windows, fireplace nor chimney, consequently the only light entering it came in at the doorway which in winter let in the cold and snow, and under these circumstances the men did not work more than three or at the utmost, four hours a day in cold weather, seeing no fireplace. I supposed the men went to Shrivenham to melt their glue which is half a mile off, but he who is the head carpenter very candidly told me that for the last 18 years (which is the period he has wrought in this shop) they always continued to do without glue and it is certain the Joiners had no glue at all, nor does he remember ever to have known any work done by candle light in this shop. The Joiners shop is now well lighted up with windows, it has a chimney and fire place, and the labour done there henceforward will be from 6 o'clock of the morning to 6 o'clock of the evening, winter and summer. I have a small desk in this shop and it is here I write and keep my accounts. The thatch of the shop has been put in to good repair as has that also of the adjoining shed, and the shed has been better secured than it was against the inclement weather. The next attention was the Saw Pit. This pit was too short by nearly three yards, and it stood endways to the timber, instead of side ways. This position of the Saw Pit created an endless loss of labour for every tree sawn here, hard to be turned and way before it could be got upon the Saw Pit. Nor was the pit protected from severe weather. It had a thatched roof but no enclosure at the sides or ends. It is now well protected in this respect. The new Stables have been put into a state of good external repair. The door and door sills have all been mended, folding doors erected at the main entrance and the whole wood work of the exterior painted. The reservoir in the centre of the Stable yard for the purpose of receiving the Stable litter has been fresh painted with Lime and those parts of the wall which surrounds it that were bulged and coming down have been rebuilt and made complete. The next of our operations was the building of the Lime Kiln. On entering the gate out of the Faringdon road to the timber yard, the view is intercepted by the return of an high hedge beyond the new Stables. Not many yards beyond this hedge on the right of the road is a recessed place in an angle formed by the road and the breast of the stone quarry. In this recess the Lime Kiln is built and also a Lime House. The quarry runs in a straight line from the kiln nearly to the kennel. In wet weather the hollow ground all the way along the foot of the quarry formed a sort of Pond which during unfavourable weather made the quarry inaccessible. To obviate this inconvenience Mr Davis proposed to drain this ground and had provided stone drain covers for the purpose. To meet the object Mr Davis had in view, and also to

draw off the springs of water which had been used to rise in wet weather contiguous to the site of the Lime Kiln we cut this drain all the way through a rock of tough lenthey stone which yielded to the pick up only in small pieces the size of ones hand. This rock when exposed to frost or weather, becomes friable and mouldens into sand so that we had to dig it so wide as to admit a wall on each to receive the covers. This drain was brought out into the ditch below the dog kennel, at about an hundred and fifty yards from its source. The next operation was to form habitations for the two Lime Burners and their families. The Dog Kennel, which was in a state of ruin, presented a facility for this purpose. It was adapted for two cottages, and these men reside in them. This building can remain as cottages pro tempore, or continually, as shall afterwards be thought expedient. The two families who reside in the stable cottages were put there by Mr Price. If they had been turned out there was no house whatever for them to go to. It would have made much conversation in the neighbourhood and would probably have been carried in a very distorted form to Mongewell. The forming a garden for each of the four cottages, the repairing the road in the timber yard, and the clearing away a great body of unsightly rubbish which was deposited near the kennel on the ground through which we had to cut the drain comprises what now has been done in this quarter. The two cottages at the kennel let for £5 a year each, the stable cottages for £3.10s each and the stable garden for £10 a year, making a total for what I call the timber yard of £27 a year. The Fob Yard wall of Mr Killard's barn and the walls of the Kennel Yard being in a bad state for want of painting were both painted as soon as we had Lime of our own. Having got these necessary conveniences, and all put into order at head quarters we began with those houses and cottages in the village which needed repairing the most and which were likely to pay the best for the expense incurred. I have already named to you Lordship the house now occupied by Miss Canfields and by Mr Hughes and the remuneration arriving to your Lordship on account of this disbursement. With the exception of this house I have confined myself to external work such as repairing the roofs, cleaning where it was wanted, the thatch and the slates free of moss and dirt, pointing the walls and rebuilding the Fob Yard walls in those places where they were bulged or fallen down, painting the doors and windows and in divers cases, colouring the walls with a mixture if Lime and ashen to hide the patched appearance arising from the new painting when mingled with the old. Opening yard drains where they were choked up, and mending pumps that would draw no water. The agreeable appearance these cottages have assumed reconciles

the inhabitant to an increase of rent where it was expedient to require it. Inclusive of the cottages at the Timber Yard and Curtis' cottage at Fernham, the increase of the cottage rents to your Lordship will be nothing short of eighty guineas a year, and your Lordship's houses still remain the cheapest let of any in the village. That portion of the houses which has undergone those repairs are in an incomparably better condition than they were, being now weather bright and in good condition. I cannot say exactly what may have been disbursed in those repairs and vamping up of cottages etc, but I am almost certain that it will be found that your Lordship will receive 25 - 30 percent for the money thus laid out. It is to be observed I have selected those things first which were likely to pay the best for the money disbursed. In some instances it has been proper to bring a house into repair where no advance of rent ought to take place. My great leading objects in what I do for your Lordship are utility and profit and connecting with those objects, beauty, where it can be united with them, without bending to too great an expense. Perhaps I am hardly warranted in sending you the copy of a note I received some time back from Mr Berens, but as it is some testimony I have not altogether failed in my attempt this way. I will transcribe his note:

Tues Sept 12th 1815

Dear Sir

May we request a single partridge for tomorrow. Curtis Cottage at Fernham is quite a model for renting and an amount to that.

Your obedient Lordship's servant

Edward Berens

The first time I went to Fernham after receiving this letter I examined this cottage critically and I cannot say but I was pleased Mr Berens was satisfied with it for I thought it admitted of animal *** unless viewed with kindness.

As during the season of action I could find full employment in superintending the workmen (being for the most part the first and the last person on the ground) I was sparing in my correspondence to your Lordship because I was more beneficially employed for your Lordship's interest than writing you long letters. So now that the period for my occupancy out of doors is much decreased I write your Lordship then long

details. I consider myself accountable for the trust reposed in me and the less restricted I am in this trust the more I consider myself concerned in the use or abuse of it. Your Lordship is under a necessity to read those details when they might be fatiguing to your Lordship, but I conceive it is proper I should send them, that your Lordship may have the option in your possession to read them or let them alone. On this consideration I may continue to write your Lordship at length as I find time from more active service. And it is a matter of sincere regret with me that from a long habit of scribbling my hand writing is new into so poor a scrawl but I hope your Lordship will not judge this any want of respect to your Lordship.

I am my Lord, your Lordship's most humble servant

George Merryweather

I have been often interrupted and as the post man is waiting, I have not time to penne what I have ***

Letter No 16

Beckett 30th November 1815

My Lord

I am honoured by your Lordship's favour of the 22nd inst. and nothing can be more pleasing to me than that your Lordship approves of my measures so far as they were then communicated to your Lordship. I wrote your Lordship on the 20th inst. with a statement of the Charities paid at Beckett and on 22nd concerning our proceedings in the buildings here which I had proposed to do in a methodical manner, but I met with so many interruptions while writing the letter I lost the management of my subject as it stood in my head where I first sat down at my desk, and I fear what I wrote became too desultory to be sufficiently clear for your Lordship to comprehend me. The accounts, the rent roll to which your Lordship wishes for are all in preparation as also divers memorandums which it may not be unpleasing to your Lordship to peruse. I have kept all the accounts on detailed sheets of paper and have not yet committed them to any booking for the purpose of learning by a little experience the nature of those objects which might become the subjects proper to be arranged and embodied in a trust of this nature. When each distant account which forms one member of the whole lay before me, I can then dove-tail them together in that order by which they shall seem to grow out of each other and which will place them in a natural and perspicuous point of view. In future I dare say your Lordship will speedily have my accounts after Lady Day and Michaelmas because the tediousness and trouble of the construction of the accounts will not have to occur a second time, and before I make a fair copy of the accounts here, Mr Davis must come over to Beckett. I wrote to him to be here the beginning of this month but he intreated I would defer his visit if possible till December as he would be extremely occupied all the month of November. My compliance with his request brings us to a period when I hope to have my son home on a visit whose assistance I intended to avail myself of in copying the papers of which I should form the rough draft. I shall find myself led to be more minute in those purposes in the first instance than will afterwards be necessary because I wish your Lordship to be brought at once to an intimate

acquaintance with every point which it may be necessary or pleasing to your Lordship to know. I hope when your Lordship does receive those statements you will not regard some additional lapse of time.

Although I have written your Lordship such long letters, I assure your Lordship it is not from the love of writing, for at all times writing has been the most reluctant of my occupations, and I am led to these lengthy details only by the strong desire I have to bring your Lordship acquainted with your own concerns here. I please that this aversion to writing with me may grow into a habit of indolence, for although I am frightened with the thoughts of having to write a long letter, when I once sit down to the employment my aversion disappears and I can make quick work of it.

Were it not that my intentions for the present is diverted from it by your letter of the 22nd I should have proceeded with other details which it would not have been unsatisfactory to your Lordship to possess, but I prefer those matters at this time to reply to your Lordship's letter which now lies before me. I am extremely pleased that your Lordship has decided to send Mr Davis here a little before Lady Day and in this your Lordship has anticipated what I would have made as request. Meanwhile with great deference to your Lordship I will offer grounds why I think quit notices to your Lordship's tenants at this time would be fraught with the most painful and disadvantageous consequences and frustrate the very object intended to be affected by this measure. That the Beckett Estate might generally be too low let as things stood two years since, I think cannot admit of a doubt but since that time and more especially since last Spring, farming produce has been decreasing in value with accelerated rapidity and it is felt in Berkshire as sensible as in other parts of the kingdom. The depression is so great that I apprehend nothing keeps your Lordship rents up here but the scope the farms had already in possession. Mr Loveden received at Michaelmas last eight notices to quit because he would not lower his rents. Sir John Throgmorton at Michaelmas received only £300 instead of £2000 and the impossibility of the farmers paying their rents has induced him to lower his land 10 shillings an acre. When farms have been let at their full value the necessity for this reduction will appear manifest on the following statement of the declination of price in farming produce in this part of Berkshire. I have this statement from a judicious and intelligent cognitance who will not deceive me and whose pursuits afford him an

opportunity of being quite accurate in his knowledge and judgement in those things and who can have no intended motive whatever for a misrepresentation of the facts.

Decline of produce prices

Butter (although now high)	2 to 3 percent
Calves	25%
Cheese	10 - 15%
Colts (alias Foals)	50%
Corn	40 - 60%
Cows	20 - 30%
Hay which was £5 is now £3.10s per ton	
Horses of prime quality	10%
Horses of inferior quality	70%
Meat	30%
Pigs	50%

The farmers not only feel depressed in spirits on account of the present state of process, but they have to contemplate the diminution which has passed on their property on hand. I have constant opportunities of witnessing this depression of spirits, and the extensive prevalence of it among the farmers, which indicates minds but ill at ease with themselves. I do not know a person partial to your Lordship's interests and more friendly to whatever measures would jointly promote them than Mr Davis. I am so firmly persuaded of his attachment to your Lordship and your Lordship's family and his sense of gratitude to the Bishop of Durham, that in nice and delicate cases I have frequently troubled him for his opinion, which he has always given me with great readiness and assurance. I am not subject to be frightened with a trifling matter, but alarmed as I myself to have been by your Lordship's injunction to give notice to the tenants for the purpose of a new let, I judged it advisable to consult with Mr Berens before this step was taken as it was my firm persuasion we should lose every tenant who was worth keeping. Mr Berens at my request has authorised me to state it as his decided opinion that if we take such a measure, nearly the whole of the estate will come in to hand, when we shall find it difficult to let it at any price without leases. We not only concur in this opinion but we

are further agreed in believing it would give an unfavourable injurious in the neighbourhood, but deep and lasting and which would be very injurious to the letting of farms at Beckett, subsequent to this time, except on leases in which case the tenants become our masters. Having dismissed what relates to my interview with Mr Berens, I beg to say in continuance of this subject that everything which can or ought in justice to be done in the advance of rents, shall be done at as early a season as the times in conjunction with opportunities will admit of its being done. If we proceed as an alternative rather than by sudden and more general measure, although we proceed slower, we shall march more silently and surely. When the immense influx of grain and flour which was imported into the kingdom pending the discussion of the Corn Bill, and afterwards of American flour is consumed, agriculture will recover itself, a doubt I think cannot be entertained of this. The spirits of the farmers will then revive and something advantageous may be done. The cupidity of the famers (some farmers) is perpetually committing them into the practice of trespasser on the property of the land lord. Some magnificent hedge is cut close by the roots to increase the fuel of the house and save coals. Fine trees are occasionally topped unjustifiably for the same purpose. Whole rows of young Elms are spoiled and thwarted in their growth by being nailed to, to save the trouble of putting down a post. All the world knows these to be great breaches of that conduct which is done from a tenant to a good land lord. The deaths of some tenants and the obvious mismanagement of others set farms at liberty, when if there be room for it, an advance of rent is readily come at. All these are occasions when I would instantly bring up my cavalry and secure the opening to gain that rent which the farmer can in reason afford to pay. In instances of trespass the farmer gains the balance of the public for his own misconduct, the land lord gets his full fair rent without either appearance or change of tenacity. An agent has the reputation of being a provident and just steward. Everything ...*missing*... and the occasion of advance in each particular rent, being obvious, the ...*missing*... remain easy and take no alarm. Thus in the case of Killard, who being a shabie man and lifted up and supposing himself fortified by the great intent he had with your Lordship's relations, made himself very supercilious on my first coming here, and particularly free with his observations at the market houses, stating a man had come to be a steward who did not understand farming. On his interference with the person to whom I let a part if Canfield's land I named to your Lordship that he was instantly served with a notice to quit, for the purpose of transferring the defalcation in

the new rent agreed for the with the tenant, to his own farm, which transition I believe first convinced him that this Estate did really and truly belong to your Lordship without control. This chastisement of Mr Killard which was delivered in measure and not in severity, has received general approbation and I understand Mr Killard is now often asked jeeringly if the new Steward at Beckett begins to understand farming yet? I should not have named this trifle in constance to your Lordship only as it is a case in point and sheweth public opinion may always be with us and the utmost rental be obtained for this estate which your Lordship would choose to receive. As this estate has been always considered to be let rather low, this impression may continue with your Lordship if allowance is not made at the same time for the attention which has recently taken place in the price of prudence. The increased rent on the land I have lately let may have contributed somewhat to have misled your Lordship's sentiments as to the lowness of rents here, but those strips of ground being let for convenience, are no rule whatever to the general let here. This estate must in the first place be greatly improved in its agricultural management subsequent to this important improvement, the times may allow great things as to the rental. My paper being exhausted, I shall write your Lordship again in a few posts as to the probable amount of ways and means at Lady Day and more especially from Lady Day throughout the summer up to Michaelmas at which time the operations here will be fully coming round, Timber, Bark, etc. To effect this with is just policy. I shall be happy to have your Lordship's decision to the Notice.

I am your Lordship's most obedient and faithful servant
George Merryweather

Letter No 17

Beckett 18th December 1815

My Lord

I have your Lordship's letter of the 3rd and 11th inst. which would have been acknowledged sooner only that I have been confined by a severe indisposition which was brought on by a cold but thank god I am now at liberty to go out again. I trust to send your Lordship at different times during the ensuing eight months remittances to the amount of £8000. The farm at Bourton which let to Canfield for £80 a year and which although called 40 acres is perhaps not more than 37 acres, I have let to a desirable tenant at £90 a year from Lady day next. The like Canfield is to have a Feeding House built but of less size. He is to do the cartage and at the expiration of the year is to pay an additional rent of 7.5% for the cost of this house. I expect Mr Davis the beginning of the ensuing week. Perhaps your Lordship might as well have principal an interest in the instance of the £200 mortgage. In this case I should not consider your Lordship a jot less likely to purchase the land if it to be sold. I remain unaltered in opinion that this estate is to be greatly improved in its revenue and looking ten years forward, I should say equal to one half of its present income namely £9000 instead of £6000 per year. I do however anticipate times more favourable for farmers than the present to justify such an opinion. The estate even now would be worth considerably more than its present value were it occupied by active north country farmers once well rooted upon it. But I know by experience that to colonize with desirable persons is one of the most arduous works that can be undertaken. A man once well settled, is more difficult to transplant than a full grown tree, and would be of no use to replace the torpid portion of the tenancy here, by mere riff raff brought from other quarters. What I have said may seem to countenance an immediate advance of rent as a means of stimulating the exertions of these inert people. At a more favourable period for agricultural prospects an advance of rents might induce this effect to a certain degree, but under the present gloom it would extinguish what little movement they do possess for spirit. I cannot call it. Men who hardly have a conception what exertion

means, or an increase of rent in the present state of the market would instead of bettering themselves be cast into utter despair. Their loss indeed would be again if this were a time to replace them to the best advantage, but it is not. When the stock of foreign grain is run off and the Corn Act begins to operate, I will cause these men or replace them as opportunity serves. One great source of the improvement in rent is the improvement which this estate admits of in its agricultural management. Johnson and Butler are both of them good natured men, but their habits are those of constant stupification and both their farms will have to be taken from them. Your Lordship is very kind in respect of Canfield's family. The eldest son who is now sixteen years of age is to go apprentice somewhere as a Butcher, and on the expiration of his apprenticeship it is proposed by his friends that he shall return to Shrivenham and set up the business of a Butcher. Your Lordship will then have it in your power to send him by the accommodation of a little land that may not be too far from the town which will be no essential injury to the farmer from whom it is taken. In inducing the family to give up the land at the town end, I held out such a prospect as I have now named otherwise the girl alone might seem to have profited by our arrangement. Whatever spare time I have, I am at the accounts. The rental at present stands thus including £198.11.8 as per Mr Barnes valuations for land in hand.

Land Rental	£ 623.3.10	10.0%	Land in hand
House Rents	144.16.0		
Garden Rents	25.9.8		
Reservoir & Cottage Rents	19.7.0		
Great Tithes	31.18.8		
Small Tithes	17.5.10		£ 647.5.7.2%
The Rental amounts of a further measure at Sag Day as follows			
Willingbroke Tithes is now			
A R P	4. 0. 33	at 60/	£ 12.12.6
			Rent at Sag Day £ 20.0.0
The House Tithes	3.0.0		15.0.0
A R P	1. 0. 4	} at 60/	4.19.10
A R P	1. 1. 9		
A Bares	1. 10.0		8.0.0
			£ 54.0.0
2 Cloves of Inc. Springs	6.0.31	at 34/	£ 20.10.7
Canfield's Farm at Banbury			24.0.5
			£ 29.17.10
			15.9.8
			7.10.0
			£ 55.7.10
There is a field held by Bankby Wilton A R P 9. 3.0 at 60/ £ 29.5.0 the son			
of Mr. Jarvis has been had, I will give him notice to quit, after			
I can let it for his father this week at 40.15 - Income			
			19.10.0
			£ 74.17.6

I know there are trifling matters, mere gleanings, but they come quietly around ...*missing*... soon while I am getting established, and jealousy of a resident steward ...*missing*... The large stands I will take by and by will be considered the effect of ...*missing*... the eagerness of a new steward to ingratiate himself with his Lord. ...*missing*... is warn off, I can better recommend myself to the reason of these ...*missing*... since which may be taken to improve this estate. Before a strong ...*missing*... the tenantry should be satisfied it is for reciprocal advantage ...*missing*...going about the buildings, they begin to perceive, and to say, I know ...*missing*...then they will be either led or driven to the proper improvement ...*missing*... consequently of their rents. Your Lordship's letters of November 22nd ...*missing*... I attend to all their contents. I am glad your Lordship continues the ...*missing*... the beef at Xmas, although I thought it might too have been dispensed with. It wasn't ...*missing*... unpopular in me to have taken it off, but I was moved to this on the ...*missing*... Lordship's acceding to the annual allowance of £40 to the four old persons ...*missing*... your Lordship could not be aware you were paying as it was passed to ...*missing*...the shape of labouring. I can bear any degree of unpopularity of my judgement ...*missing*...the right side, but it is pleasanter to avoid this displeasure and get be in the way of one's duty. I will take a proper opportunity to speak to Mr Berens concerning the children's clothes. I did name it once, but I suppose it had escaped his recollection, or the girls shortly after were all new clothes. I rather imagine about that time I had been disadvantageously represented to Mr Beren's family by his curate whose way your new steward seemed greatly to stand. I named to your Lordship that we had deferred putting on the roof of the Lime Kiln until the wall which was constituted on the artificial mound of earth, should have found its proper settlement. The roof was closed in on Saturday and the Lime burner tells me that the fire now burns so steadily and uniformly that he burns eight bushels a day more Lime than he did with the same quantity of coal. On measuring the Lime, I hope to find his representation correct. It is a most extraordinary circumstance that few of the tenants can inform me of the time of their entrance nor of the quantity of ground they have in arable. The last I know and the former I hope to learn of Mr Davis.

I am my Lord etc...George Merryweather

Letter No 18

London 15th/16th January 1816

My Lord

I wrote to your Lordship to Durham some weeks since and I have since had a letter from Mr Davis saying he could not possibly be at Beckett until the middle of this month. On Wednesday or Thursday I fully expect him as I wrote him his attendance had become indispensable. By that time I hope also to have Mr Jennings maps of the estate. Divers of the tenants cannot speak as to their time of entry whether it was Lady Day or Michaelmas and in some instances a part of the farm has been entered at Lady Day and the other part at Michaelmas. Thursday the first day of February is appointed as the rent day, against which time I will thank your Lordship to instruct me as to the disposal of the rents. I came to town *** of being called up very unexpectedly by the solicitor of a commercial house to give my testimony in a matter whereon a law suit depends. I purport to be at Beckett tomorrow. The occasion of my writing your Lordship at this time is to say that your Lordship or your Lordship's family attach any particular consequence to the position of the late William Canfield's house (as I think you Lordship seemed to do in one of your letters). I think a more advantageous purchase can be made of it now than can probably be made at any subsequent period. I happened to meet with Mr Berens on Friday afternoon in the course of my walks, and I asked him if he should think Canfield's house a desirable acquisition to your Lordship if it could be purchased for £700. He said most assuredly and that everyone thought it a house your Lordship should by no means miss although no new agreement presents itself to my view to alter my sentiments in respect to this house. It is my duty to state to your Lordship that I think I could negotiate for the purchase of this house at some where about £700. It might be too much to say that I could order to home the greater part of the purchase money remain at interest, but as the most difficult things do commonly yield to an unremitting perseverance, I would try to accomplish this point also. Indeed I could make the purchase of the house dependant

on the contingent I write to your Lordship that Mr Haines had bid £810 for the house on the presumption that his brother in London would come to reside at it. That negotiation has come to nothing and if I am well informed, Mr Haines wishes to have the house for a price so much below its value that a disgust is conceived for him. Under such circumstances it is that I know I could have preference for your Lordship both in price and terms were it only to disappoint Mr Haines. Both the price however which I have named and the circumstance of the money continuing on interest are only presumptive with me, but yet so strongly presumptive that I think it well to write your Lordship what are my impressions. As this house is now advertised to be sold by private contract if your Lordship consider it in any point of view acceptable, I should have your Lordship's determination immediately.

There is a point I have far more at heart than the purchase of this house on any conditions whatever, this is the sending off your Lordship estate by exchanges with Mr Blagrove's all those places where they are so much entangled and interlocked. I have been given to understand that Mr Blagrove is of so distressed a temper that he suspends in any point of business which would be advantageous to his interests to have transacted only that he is afraid of doing business he may have cheated on, deceived by his agents. The circumstance however does no ways discourage me from an attempt where nothing can be lost although nothing may be accomplished under cover of an ostensible object in which your Lordship is no way concerned, and which is very foreign to the one of which I am writing. I took the occasion to send Mr Blagrove on the subject of exchanges. I was glad to find he considered this desirable if it was only practicable. I instantly replied to him, "that the only method to do transactions of this nature well and pleasantly was to step over the heads of stewards, agents and all middle men whatever, who for the most part had objects in view not essential at all to this business in hand and that tended only to impede the ...*missing*... Their employers instead of promoting it that the time and simple and ...*missing*... made was for the principal themselves to acquaint them selves with the value of the lands to be exchanged, and not each other with the intention of attempting nothing beyond a fair and equitable exchange." Mr Blagrove expressed himself quite pleased with this easy manner of accomplishing so desirable a purpose and he said he would be happy to have an interview with your Lordship when your Lordship should be at Beckett next summer. This being all I could wish for the present I directly

turned the conversation to other subjects lest I should appear to make this an object of too desirable a nature. It was last Thursday sennight I was at Mr Blagrove's, Calcot Park.

I am my Lord etc... George Merryweather

Letter No 19

Beckett 24th January 1816

My Lord

Mr Davis has appointed to be here on finding at which time he says he will not fail me. I wrote Mr Jennings urgently for the plan of the estate about every four or five days. There surely never were such dilatory persons as they are. I received your Lordship's letter of the 17th inst. on Sunday, and on Monday I bought Mr Canfield's house having written Mr Tarrant the executor to be at Shrivenham on that day in anticipation of your Lordship's answer. The purchase money may remain unpaid as being your Lordship may please on your Lordship's bond, unless death or some very unforeseen circumstances shall render it necessary to be called in by Mr Tarrant's family. We enter on the house immediately and the interest of the money commences next Lady Day. In consequence of the advertisement in the papers Mr Tarrant had two applications for the house on Saturday, but having received my letter, he would enter into no treaty till he had seen me, as I had written him. "however averse I was to the buying of houses property, yet rather than he should be obliged to those that property away, I would make him a handsome bed at a dead lift." He could not however in common honesty let me have the house for less than £750. Mr Pinnegar a tenant of Lord Radnor had applied to him for a gentleman on Saturday and was extremely desirous for him to set a price but he said he could not price the house till he had done with me. To say the truth I was afraid of longer delay provided your Lordship really wished to have the house. As we are now in possession of the house, I shall be glad to seeing your Lordship instructions concerning it. It can be made

not only a pretty but a good house at a certain expense. What work your Lordship thinks of Hedges going to it before the new taxes come on this house (Beckett) in March and closing every window up at Beckett House except the part lately occupied by Mr Stratham into which I would retire, as being much warmer than the lower part of the house. The books can either be taken into a room at Canfield's house or into a room appropriated for them in the part lately occupied by Mr Stratham by this arrangement the taxes would be very small indeed in comparison of the present taxes.

I am very glad your Lordship approves of my views in Mr Blgrave's matter.

All the necessary documents will be prepared for your Lordship in due time. I dare say this object will be accomplished impossible as every body here would think it to be. If it get air it will be frustrated. I have named it to no one, desirable as this exchange may be. There is a purchase of land to the extent of about forty acres, wonderfully more so, as it cuts into the very vitals of this estate. In November last Mr Berens said to me, "If he ever felt a disposition to perhaps on that command, thou shall not covet" it was in coveting this piece of ground for your Lordship. I was rejoiced to hear having so far I had been making my approaches to this piece of land ever since last July and it was with a view to the purchase and payment of this land that I was wishful the ripe and unnecessary timber should come down. The more distant and delicate my approaches, the more likely they were to succeed. There is a certain person this case who has been gratified by my courtesy towards him. I have frequently had him to eat with me and drink with me. I have flattered him by my attention. I have employed him. I have traded with him and promoted his interests, but I never till Monday expressed to him any desire I had for this land to which he is a Trustee. I do verily believe we shall not only get it at a fair value, but have all or nearly all the purchase money remaining at interest on your Lordship's bond. He himself however requires time to bring this matter to a bearing and it cannot be perfected under six or twelve months. He has assured me he will accomplish my desire. I have not named my views to anyone, not even to Mr Berens for when these intentions are once made known, they do somehow or other become public and the business becomes spoiled. This land belonged to a person of the name of Wirdnam who is dead. It divides the farm of Akerman and Giles. (*Probably Townsend Piece NBM*).

The post man is waiting

I am my Lord etc... George Merryweather.

Least Mr Tarrant should die and the money be called in, it is a stipulation in our agreement that the money cannot be called in for under fifteen months. This Mr Tarrant has signed on.

Letter No 20

Beckett 6th February 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 29th ult. and I attend to the contents. Mr Crowdy informs me the interest on the £180 on mortgage does not become due until Lady Day and that the money cannot be conveniently called in. Your Lordship may rest assured no oppressive measure will be presumed to come at the piece of land. I am much obliged to your Lordship for permitting us to remove into the sun side of this mansion for the other wing is very cold. Mr Berens yesterday went with me over Canfield's house. I am to give him the dimensions of it today and he will make a plan of it tomorrow which he says will be a pleasing task to him and desirable. I shall beg of him to write such observations on the state of this house and what he considers indispensable to be done at it before it can be occupied by any part of your Lordship's family. He is very much pleased that it is bought. After inspecting Canfields house I accompanied Mr Berens at his desire along the two lines of the proposed new road. The one that Major Price traces out and the other which your Lordship is far more desirable. In this instance it will run over a firm sand bottom, the material will have to be carted up much less distance, the road passing altogether through your Lordship's own estate, no privilege has to be purchased, about two acres of ground will be gained by this diversion of the road and in two different places you catch an avenue of trees already planted and will grow. In the direction pitched upon by Major Price the road would have to be carried through a low wet ground approaching to a swamp. It would require twice the quantity of materials and the

materials lay at a much greater distance, two if not three bridges would have to be constructed over the brook and consent would have to be purchased both through the college land and through Lord Cravens. The road to be made would be of greater length in this direction than by Mr Bennett's house. In all these points Mr Berens and I are quite agreed. When anything now is necessary to be said concerning the road, Mr Berens himself will write your Lordship. Being thereon more unto Mr Berens company yesterday that I have been at any one time before, we had conversation on different matters concerning this estate, and I learnt one thing, which I had a strong conception of before it was confirmed to me by Mr Berens, but I will just name to your Lordship that last July Mr Price was at Beckett (the Major) and was as I thought particularly inquisitive in his enquiries concerning the building of the new house. The questions were put so home to me as to the time when and should commence building that I took upon myself the blame of any delay there might be in building it. I said your Lordship has placed me here very much with a view to the building of the new Mansion and had proposed beginning with the out offices, but that I was wishful to be a little better acquainted with the neighbourhood and its usages before we began, and also to see if we could not make our own bricks and Lime which would be a great saving. I remember what I said on this subject satisfied him at the time. When Mr Barrington Price was over here shooting in the autumn, nearly the same enquiries were put to me by him which I answered in the like manner, indeed in this instance I went farther. At this period we were at a loss for materials to construct a Lime House near the Lime Kiln. As Mr Barrington Price proposed to be at Beckett again in the course of a fortnight, I thought he should have proof of our intentions, and as the next thing to building the new house was the taking down of the old one I immediately pulled down the straw house and saddle house adjoining the old stables and removed them to the Lime kiln. As the two buildings taken down formed no part of the original building but was only appendages subsequently run up against the stable wall, no injury or fracture was done to the remaining walls. In August last a party of Ladies and Gentlemen who professed themselves to be friends of Major Price came here from the neighbourhood of Wantage to see Beckett House, the pictures, etc. I conducted them through the house at which time one of the gentlemen asked me if it were likely a new house would be built here. Before I could possibly answer him, one of his companions, very rudely as I think, said if his head never ached till Lord Barrington built a new house at Beckett he need to be under no alarm. I

answered him with a degree of warmth and then assigned to the gentleman who made the enquiry of me the same reasons for its delay which I have before named. Having stated thus much to your Lordship I now add that Mr Berens yesterday assured me no one thing on earth would please the Bishop of Durham so much as to your Lordship beginning to build this house, and that the growing interest which the Bishop took in your son Mr Barrington, increased this desire even to a degree of serenity (that is the expression Mr Berens made use of.) I acquainted Mr Berens of the debate with respect to Mr Atkinson, that told unblushing changes. Mr Berens thinks Mr Atkinson may be used very sparingly and at a known expense. I said if your Lordship began this house on Mr Atkinson's plan, I thought the Bishop of Durham in consideration of the largeness of your Lordship's family ought to present your Lordship with more than the sum of £10,000. Mr Berens said if the house were only once begun he had no doubt but the Bishop would be so pleased as to give almost any sum that was necessary. Mr Berens moreover added that he thinks I have unnecessarily frightened myself with the cost of this house, that with the material of the present house and £20,000, or even less than this, he would himself dare to engage to build and finish the new house on Mr Atkinson's plan.

I have thought it my duty to state to your Lordship in detail what I have stated on this subject seeing Mr Berens 'communication must be supposed to arise from the way he *** to your Lordship for a person more faithful to your Lordship's interests cannot be. On this subject if it is for me only to add that if your Lordship should consider to meet this strong desire of the Bishop of Durham, to proceed with the new house without further delay, I will watch rightly over the disbursement and that I do most cordially concur with your Lordship in commencing on the offices first leaving the mansion itself till the last and even in building the mansion itself I would build the shell first and finish by degrees first one room entirely and then another, commencing with those which are the most necessary. Your Lordship must know very well that the building of a great house is for the most part a scene of great spillage and that the architect if he be not what he ought to be, is the greatest knave of the gang. For my own part, so late as last June, I have had a commission offered on all the timber we may use by one of the fait houses in London. If Mr Atkinson be intercepted in the perquisites of the hold which he possesses, his representation of me at Mongewell will not be of the most friendly kind. Mr Clarke of

Stockton was made very unhappy by not meeting with proper support from the Earl of Bedminster in the building of his new mansion so that his services in that instead were of little value until it was too late.

Canfield's House can in a great measure be equipped by the materials in the old wing of this house. I think my lord it would hardly be advisable to take down this old wing of the house until the materials are wanted for the new one. The windows can be made up with the old laiths to be found in the place, so that the window and property tax, and poor rates will cease upon it. The valuable materials of the interior will no where be kept in so good preservation as in the house itself. It will cost £150 to take it down judiciously which many may be saved in a great measure by making it a condition in letting part of the work as the new house, that they still take down the house.

Mr Davis was here Saturday sennight and pleased me much by resisting the way unreasonable claims of many of the tenants. There is still too much allowed. I have a letter from Mr Jennings; he says the map of the estate shall be here now very soon, when I will forward the accounts etc. On Thursday last I received £2001.7s on account of the rent, exclusive of property tax. I sent £2000 to Moreland & Co, which they have acknowledged the receipt of today. I consider the rest safe, but some delay from the presence of the taxes and others from a short sighted anti policy. I expected to find it soon. The Post man is waiting. I shall write your Lordship at length again in the course of the present week. The Oxford paper was sent off on Sunday, the day after I received it. I gave it to the Post man myself.

I see in a London paper that it is the intention of the government to have a Custom House at Shields. I remember Mr Rowly the Deputy Chairman of the ...*missing*... Company of Newcastle to have informed me that if such a thing should take place of which the Newcastle people were very much afraid, it would greatly save the Port of Shield, the wet dock.

I am my Lord etc, George Merryweather

NB. I will write in my next covering the Fernham & Bourton lands. I am glad your Lordship has made the arrangement you have done. It is the very thing I wished.

Letter No 21

Beckett 13th February 1816

My Lord

I have received your Lordship's letter of the 9th inst. which came to hand today. The accounts shall be forwarded directly. I will wait a few days longer for the maps of the estate which Mr Jennings has now assured me shall be with me directly. In future your Lordship shall always have the accounts immediately after the rent day. Canfields is a dry house but much out of repair as I have always stated to your Lordship. A minute plan of it will accompany the papers. Then this plan Mr Berens has taken a sketch which he has forwarded to your Lordship through your son by way of London. I had a letter from your son dated the 5th saying he and the Bishop thought it as well to take the house down. Perhaps he will consider to defer this on your naming to him from much many of the valuable materials will be injured if they are taken down before they are wanted for the new house. In Shrivenham Mr Berens is quite agreed with me and he judges the marble fireplaces alone (in all the house) to be worth £500. I had another letter from your son dated the 9th inst. saying the Bishop had expressed a desire to see the plan of the new house, the day before and wished me to send it, which I did on Monday, and Mr Berens letter to your Lordship formed a part of the parcel. The pictures and books shall be removed into Canfield's house when Hedges gets into it. The pictures to the best of my judgement are in the same repair they were when we came to this house, but I have not had them cleaned, being afraid of injuring them. In fine weather the windows had been opened to air the rooms and we have frequently made fires in them in moist weather to dry them. In future I will take the rents to London as your Lordship directs. It will be quite a treat to me to see my friends there twice a year. The discount never once occupied to my mind.

As your Lordship and your son have considered to dispose of the land at Bourton and Fernham and lay the money out in land near Beckett, might it not be well to be disposing of the land as opportunity shall present itself for doing it with advantage. In looking forward to an exchange with Mr Blagrove your Lordship has not an adequate quantity of

land here so situated as to meet the full exchange that it might be desirable to your Lordship to make. Mr Blagrave is greatly involved in debt. I believe embarrassingly so, by the witness of one of his sons. As Mr Blagrave is represented not to settle his concerns until he drives by necessity to do so, it is not improbable but it may become convenient to sell some of the land there, and the money in all likelihood would be wanted by him on an emergency. I think it might not be amiss to be prepared for such an event by the previous sale of the land at Bourton and Fernham if a good price can be obtained for it.

If your Lordship be of this sentiment I should be glad to know what these lands contain and what price your Lordship thinks should now be had for it. The land at Bourton is called forty acres but I believe is measured only about thirty seven acres. Canfield paid £80 a year for it. I have let it for £90 a year. The Fernham land and cottage lets for £54 per year, it now lets for £64. The property at Fernham would sell but parcelled out into three or four lots. The Fernham land is not Tithe free. The sale of these lands were the subject I intended to write to your Lordship on the latter end of last week, but I became engaged with Mr Berens in matter of the road and Canfield's house.

With respect to remittances, I am still of opinion that before the end of August, I can remit you at different periods what will make the £2000 already sent £8000 but what precise sums at and at what stated prices I really cannot determine. Everything in this country is in a state of perfect stagnation. The farmers seem without a market for their produce. Yesterday was one of Faringdon's Great Fairs as it is called, but I have learnt from five different persons that hardly anything could be sold at any price. It's universal dejection among the farmers and traders prevail in this part of Berkshire. The agricultural interest now seems to be suffering what the manufacturing interest underwent some years back. The parliamentary relief, but I fear the national debt leaves little room for expectancy from that quarter. In the Beckett Estate there is immense scope for energy on the part of the farmers, but they have no energy nor exertion. I never in my life met with such supine people, even the very horses are the same.

Mr Davis on his late visit told several of them in my presence that they were the worst farmers in England. This censure however does not apply to every one of them.

I am my Lord etc, George Merryweather

Letter No 22

Beckett 1st March 1816

My Lord

Your Lordship will have received my account and paper although I did not get them sent off on Saturday by reason of there being longer in copying than I expected. Having only one of my daughters to write out the fair copy for your Lordship there are more erasures that I could have wished, but if the plan of keeping these accounts be acceptable to your Lordship I propose that she shall write a more perfect copy of the following:- Numbers into a large ledger which I have provided for the purpose and which will hold a fair copy of the accounts in succession from time to time as they shall be presented to your Lordship and approved of by you. The numbers I propose to insert in this ledger are No 3 - 4 - 5 - 8 - 10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14. I have wished to have a merit with your Lordship in the construction of these accounts. If I have an aptitude for any thing I suppose it's for arrangement, but at least I have always been to do so and in any instance wherein I may have failed in these accounts the demerit is my own for I have copied the plan of no one. The supplementary accounts, which must in due course be presented to your Lordship are the Brick, Lime and Timber accounts. Your Lordship will also receive a memorandum of the Game & Fish which has been taken with the dates and appropriation. Each tree that is felled your Lordship will be acquainted with its species, length, girth, value and appropriation, whether used or sold. In the lime and in the brick accounts the names of the purchasers, the places of their residence, the quantity and price will be specified. By another memorandum account your Lordship will know the quantity of rough wood and the number of gates and measuring posts taken to each farm. In due time there will be a few more memorandum accounts which will be made out for the purpose of bringing your Lordship immediately acquainted with what ever I can suppose useful information relative to your Lordship's property here or that can be pleasing to your curiosity and such of them as are worthy of being recorded and may be worth remembrance can be copied into the Great Book. Before I advert to your Lordship's of the 24th ult. I just have to

remark on the accounts that in No 2 a paper drawn out by Mr Davis' nephew purporting to be a rent roll. Mary Edgington stands indebted £209.18s for arrears and as a tenant whose half yearly rent is £104.19s. Mr Davis says Mrs Edgington has sundry bills against the Beckett trust equivalent or near equivalent to those arrears. She has lately died in great poverty and her son who represented her and who of late years managed her concerns, has failed and is now out of the way a second time to avoid his creditors. Under the head of the Great Tithes the claim on Carter became extinct by the exchange of land with Lord Radnor. Grinnel is dead, and a dividend only is expected to be paid on his debts. The arrears against the Lewis' are wrong. He produced a receipt in full for them signed by Mr Davis, which Mr Davis admits. Jonathan Wirdnam is dead, but his trustee has presumed to pay his arrears as soon as his concerns become a little more settled. We hold 80 tons of Hay of Mr Johnsons (by computation) and the remainder of the produce of his sales I have not yet received. The person who bought his corn complains heavily and says he has it all on hand. After everything I could do to prevent it, Antwyche obtained his surcharge, and this through the superannuation of Mr Loveden, for I can call it by no other name. Mr Berens was present at the meeting of Commissioners when his surcharges were confirmed to him. When I saw that the Commissioners were determined to carry this point, I said as much on the occasion or as decorum would allow me to say, and when I left them, Mr Berens said I could not possibly have done more than I had done in this vexatious case.

I am extremely rejoiced that your Lordship will be at Beckett this month and that we may hope to see you again in the course of the summer. I requested Mr Berens to go with me through Canfields house and we concur in opinion that it is advisable to do as little at it as possible until your Lordship shall have seen it and given instructions concerning it. Against your Lordship come, it is proposed to do just so much at the slates as to redo the roof *** , to glaze the broken windows, to white wash the passage and certain rooms that may be wanted while your Lordship is here this month, and to warm the house well with fires. As Mr Berens sent your Lordship a plan taken from mine, I considered to keep my own, and not forward it to Durham, as I shall want it for use. The rooms fixed on for your Lordship's present use are little Parlour, 11ft 5in by 12ft 7in the only finished room in the house; the Kitchen 18ft 4in by 15ft 9in, the Bed Room 15ft 6in by 14ft 8in, the room 35ft 6in by 16ft 9in is divided with temporary partition of boards. One of the rooms thus

formed, will admit of two beds for two of your Lordship's sons and the other room will serve as an occasional sitting room. Hedges would sleep in the room 16ft by 14ft 5in and the two small rooms 11ft.3in by 10ft 9in and 11ft 3in by 9ft 8in would accommodate the servants. There are two beds and bed steads suitable for the servants but bedding is very indifferent. We are of opinion if your Lordship send bedding and linen it will be better to suspend buying furniture until your Lordship has seen the house. We in between us without inconvenience furnish your Lordship with what may be wanting for at present. Mr & Mrs Berens will have to be at Oxford next Monday sennight and if in the mean time it meet your Lordship's approbation, they will purchase a few chairs of a description that might afterwards do for the reading rooms in the new house. At the same time a carpet might be added for the little parlour. I have seen the furniture which is left in Beckett House with the exception of the two beds which I have named and a few chairs which I can have mended up for the Kitchen against your Lordship come. I do not see anything worth naming. There is no linen. The best conveyance for goods from London to Beckett is by Harts Waggons from the New Inn, Old Bailey to Faringdon. Goods by water are frequently two months on the passage. I will digest my thoughts in respect to the best way of going to work with the new house and submit them in writing to your Lordship. The architect should lose no time with his specification and estimate. I do not consider the latter of any value whatever, but as it may save unforeseen purposes that may be turned to your Lordship's advantage. When a building of this magnitude is begun, with one must go a very different way to work for the materials than when a small home has to be built. Every article must be had at the first hand and we must escape all the imposition and high profits of retail dealers. Mr Berens named what your Lordship wait to him concerning the road.

I am my Lord etc, George Merryweather

PS. As we hold abundance of Hay of Johnsons, your Lordship's horses had best be at Beckett Stables and the servants at Canfield's house. Mr Berens also is quite of this opinion. I do not know how Mrs Lucas may regulate her charge on such a personage as your Lordship, but if she regulate her scale by the quality and fortune of the parties who fall into her hands, I can see it will be magnificent and princely for she hates meanness in

the ...*missing*... I am persuaded will not fail of being most complimentary to your Lordship and to every member of your Lordship's most honourable family.

Letter No 23

Beckett 26th March 1816

Mr Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of 23rd on Sunday and I sat down yesterday to write in reply but was taken off by a person who came to take a piece of land. Other matters occurring after this and Monday not being a Post Day with us at Shrivenham, I have deferred writing your Lordship till this morning. I have had £5 an acre bid for the field held by Berkley Wilson at £3. It is called Day's Field and stands number 5 on the map, the quantity is $9\frac{3}{4}$ acres, consequently the advance of rent will be £19.10s. Wilson however must have preference if he will give the same rent since the property hay is to be taken off. I have considered it would be desirable to have £200 a year more for Mr Bennett's farm or as near it as one can come. Whatever advance this farm can be let, Mr Bennett of course ought to have the preference if he choose to accept it. It happens then two persons are related to almost every body in and about the place so that I may be considered as taking the Bull by the Horns. I believe in justice to your Lordship. Mr Bennett's farm should admit of the increase or thereabouts which I have named that your Lordship may have no hand in this advance. I will give notice to quit before your Lordship and your son arrive and take the consequences upon myself believing it to be the duty of every servant to a good master to interpose himself in all the ungracious but necessary concerns of business, which fall within the range of his employment. I cannot for a moment be supposed to have the slightest personal motive in this measure which is painful enough, but I do not see the wisdom of being too sensitive to the case of two persons who themselves are utterly incapable of comprehending the feeling. Mr Wilson is in good circumstance. Mr Bennett's family are all well provided for and he himself does not spend £80 a year although he is believed to be worth £40,000. I have seen into these

particulars because there will be some sad story carried of me to Mongewell about thus treating the old tenants at Beckett etc. Your Lordship can anticipate this if you see well by giving the real state of the case and I am confident Mr Clarke of Stockton would himself act thus for the Bishop of Durham were he his Steward for I do not know any man who would be more manly in these causes in taking upon him for his master. When the matter with Bennett and Wilson shall have subsided I will take a couple more and in all instances I will do it with as good a grace and courtesy as lies in my power to soften the reaction of the advance of rent.

The Lime will answer my expectations and I believe the monopoly of that article will fall to the Beckett Estate. I have strung together such information as I have gathered from Dr Anderson, Mr Kent and Mr Brown which I judged most likely at once to enlighten and excite this part of the country on the subject of Lime for a manure. I gave my manuscript to Mr Berens this morning who will correct it where necessary for the press and by Saturday, I expect to have 200 pamphlets, the number I propose to have struck off. I have delayed this work so long because we could not sooner be prepared to supply any demand that might have been created by it, and I have also come now fully possessed of the prejudices to be destroyed.

In what relates to the new Mansion House, I will confine myself entirely to the information necessary for your Lordship to obtain of Mr Atkinson distinguishing such part as is indispensably necessary, so indispensably necessary indeed, that your Lordship's commands will be imperative on him to grant it and such part arising desirable to be had immediately if it can be obtained of him. It is indispensable we should immediately have;

1st. A plan of the drains, cellars and all under ground works.

2nd. A specification of the offices and inclosures. This specification must mention the heights and the thickness of the boundary wall.

3rd. Working plans for the carpentry and masonry of the offices.

4th. He will specify the scantlings or dimensions of the carpentry on the supposition that it is made from Fir timbers and Deals.

5th. He will specify on a supposition it were made from Oak

6th. He will specify on a supposition if it were made from Elm

7th. On a principle of economy including durability, also where would Mr Atkinson use this were it Teak and were it Elm

8th. To specify with great accuracy the mode of measuring each kind of work

It is desirable the following information should be obtained which as well as the former should have Mr Atkinson's signature to it.

1st. The price of carpentry supposing the articles to be of Fir

2nd. The price of carpentry supposing the articles to be of Oak

3rd. The price of carpentry supposing the articles be of Elm

4th. When Joiners and Carpenters work must be done by day in any instance, what is the proper days wage, and how many the hours.

5th. The price he allows as to Bricklayers, Slaters, Plasterers, Sawyers for Oak, Fir and Elm, Masons, Painters, Paper Hangers, Plumbers and Glaziers.

NB. In all instances it is supposed the materials are found by your Lordship when any of the above artificers work by day, what should be their respective days wages and how many working hours per day.

6th. The price per static yard for excavating cellars and foundations.

7th. His mode of external finish for the out offices supposing they're to be built of old materials.

8th. The present price of Fir timber and Deals in London of the three different qualities and for money and for credit and what credit.

9th. Mr Atkinson will please to say what parts of the work in this mansion he thinks it will be necessary to employ London Workmen on, and what will be the price in such instances.

10th. Mr Atkinson can be asked his mode of letting works to the chief artificers, and what guards and securities he provides for the due fulfilment of the work in respect both to the time and quality. Perhaps ...*missing*...Fences will be found in the mode of payment.

If Mr Atkinson decline giving answers to these detailed inquiries and ...*missing*...to the Price Books that are published and which are in everybody's hands, he can be requested to name the price book which he prefers and which this becomes his own by adoption.

The view I have in some of these enquiries is to put your Lordship into possession of a written document that your Lordship may have occasion to use in your own defence with the Bishop of Durham if Mr Atkinson should at some time turn restive on finding himself baulked in any extravagant hopes he may have formed of plunder at this place. Unless he have some distrust at the time of giving the information above required. I am persuaded he will then quote which will fully justify your Lordship committing his powers to his own particular province. When all the information is obtained from Mr Atkinson that shall appear necessary in this point of view and his specifications obtained for which he will be entitled to a recompense agreeable to the ability, frankness and sincerity with which they seem to be given, he can then be made acquainted with the footing on which his services as architect will be required and the terms of these services can be stipulated for with reasonable liberality but at the same time with very correct precision.

I have told Mrs Lucas your Lordship and your son, are expected next Tuesday. I think this is the best arrangement that could have been called upon so far as it will afford your Lordship opportunity to see Canfield's house nearly in the state in which it was purchased.

I am my Lord etc .. George Merryweather

Letter No 24

Beckett 15th April 1816

My Lord

I hope your Lordship arrived at Durham safe and sound, my lady and all your family well. Having obtained the information at Birmingham which was the object of my journey thither. I took Abingdon on my return and concluded my arrangements for the sale of Lime there. The traders of Birmingham I find like the hand of other places. The chief of those with whom I had communication at Birmingham and who is an eminent Locksmith. When requested by me to state his mode of payment and what discount he allowed for ready money, took me into another room where we were by ourselves and then he said, "they never did allow discount to Noblemen, but that they allowed a commission to the Steward." I asked, "what commission." He said, "five percent." But I suppose this soft smooth spoken man would have surrendered himself to any percentage for which I might have chosen to stipulate. This man was a stinking instance of the force of habit ingrafted on a mean education, for at the time he was conversing with me he would have been no unfit subject from whom to have taken a drawing of Lazarous raised from the dead. His body swathed up in close clothes and his long meagre visage appearing from under a layer of dark cotton night cap. He told me he had been in great danger and he certainly then was a man with one foot in the grave and another out of it. This honest gentleman has recently supplied the Earl of Bridgewater with hardware to the amount of £3000, but I have doubt after the Clerk of the Works was dismissed. Mr Clarke would give a sharp look out after him. If my memory be correct, I think it was on the morning of your Lordship leaving Shrivenham, but before your Lordship got into the carriage that I named to your Lordship two pieces of information that had been communicated to my family during the last day of your Lordship's stay here, the one concerning Mr Ackerman's niece having placards in her possession which she showed to Mr Streat's daughter and which she told her as a great secret, she was to stick up in the Privy and Summer House and where your Lordship sons might be supposed to go. This was on the day the young gentlemen were expected to arrive at the Inn. The other communication was made to my son Horatio, a lad just turned fifteen, by two of Mr

Killard's sons, who are frequently his play fellows. The enigma of the communication was thus. About three weeks since some men were putting in the spring onions into my garden, when one of them observed to me that the Bull Finches and other birds would not leave a berry on the berry trees. I asked him what I must do to prevent it. He answered, "let master Horatio get a gun and shoot them." Horatio who was standing by, was too much pleased to let slip such an occasion of preferring his suit and having obtained my permission he was not long in producing a gun. I must here state to your Lordship that Mr Killard has a man servant of the name of Jonathan Green, a good natured fellow, with whom my son Horatio seems to have knocked up an acquaintance. When the boy was returning from the village with his borrowed gun, he saw his commander Jonathan Green coming towards him on the walk. He directly put some powder into the gun, primed it, and then called out, "Johnathan I'll shoot you!" The lad fired into the air and Jonathan to humour the frolick, fell flat on the ground. He then got up and after they had their chat together, Jonathan proceeded to the town and Horatio to the garden to shoot Bull Finches. Of this I knew nothing until the afternoon previous to your Lordship leaving Shrivenham. It was then the boy told me that Richard Killard and his brother (Mr Killard's son) had just been with him and said, "that some time back, Mr Hedges wished Jonathan to go to Lord Barrington when he came over and say that Horatio Merryweather attempted to shoot him." Green said, "he could not do so for Horatio was only in fun and fired his gun into the air." It was still however urged upon Green to go and, "Horatio would have to pay him a great sum of money." Green still repeated he would not do so, for Horatio was only doing it by way of a frolick. These communications I made to your Lordship before you left Shrivenham. The occupation I found the evening before your Lordship left Shrivenham, the conversation that beguiled the road and the gratification and employment I found in going through the factories at Birmingham the following day, engrossed my attention and withdrew me from myself. But when the business of the day was over, and as I sat unoccupied in my chair, this treatment of Ackerman and Hedges urged itself forcibly on my mind and viewing the consequences, not as they then stood, deprived of their sting, harmless and inoffensive, but as they might have stood had your Lordship not been a gentleman of sound judgement and business knowledge. Had your Lordship been a man feeble in judgement, flattered in your education and fickle in your attachment (qualities which invite assailment) there really is no saying what length a few wantless people might have gone

in their combinations against the new steward. The beginning of sin is the letting out of water. If Green had yielded to the importunity of Hedges, he could not have stepped back in his evidence. The assistant game-keeper would have been ready witness to confirm his testimony, and my son must have gone and been tried for his life at Abingdon. The death of an innocent lad, the sorrow of heart, and the shame and confusion of face which must ever afterwards have, could his father and mother and near relatives for his ignominious death rushed with such force on my imagination (and being under the influence of a little fatigue) as to bring on the return of a strong nervous affection to which for a few years past I have been in a greater or less degree subject when my spirits are greatly agitated. Under this excessive debility I was detained at Birmingham two days but by kind nursing and attentive medical assistance, I was enabled to get home on Wednesday evening. I experienced a relapse the morning after I got home, but by keeping within doors and taking care of myself, I am a great deal better, and if warmer weather come that I dare take some out-of-door exercise, I hope soon to be restored. At present if I were to remain in the passages of the house two minutes, the cold air acting on my face and hands would induce an inward sensation like a suspension of the functions of the stomach, a lightness of the neck like approaching strangulation, and an involuntary agitation of the lips and under part of the face. A general privation of strength takes place, but more especially in the hands, so that during a period of attack it would be utterly impossible to write or hold a pen. Indeed, if the hands were ever so well able to write the other sensations would of themselves call off the attention from all worldly concerns and indicate that it was a time to prepare for eternity. Thank God I am a great deal better and this being my better period of the day, I have without any difficulty been able to write so long a letter. I wish to live to see the new mansion house built, and this estate perfected in all its productive capabilities. I firmly believe I shall be spared to see this consummation of my wishes and they will remain a monument of gratitude to your Lordship and your family.

If I am at all as well this evening as I am now at midday, I will write your Lordship again, saying what steps I have taken and what I intend to take under the present lucky order of events. Two or three men committing themselves by an effort at my destruction have done more to promote and accelerate your Lordship's interests than I could have done in five years. Your Lordship's discernment and resolution broke through their Phalanx and

it remains with me merely to chase the ...*missing*... off the field. I find, had Ackerman been successful, your Lordship would ...*missing*... had a lever, but when that did not do, they began of betraying each other ...*missing*... however not only to believe but to be assured that in every instance your Lordship would have perceived almost unequalled forbearance on my part, with meanness and selfishness on theirs. This estate shall yet be peopled with a happy and confiding tenantry, but first the Augean stable must be cleansed of the sycophants who have so long preyed upon it. The Post is just going. I have inclosed the assesses papers.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

PS. Since your Lordship left Shrivenham, Hedges has been mimicking to several persons what he calls the cringing manner in which I met your Lordship on your late visit. He affects to say he had this from the boy who accompanied your Lordship from the north. This cannot be, as your Lordship must be perfectly insensible to such a mode of approach but if that inexperienced youth has been brought into communication with Hedges he will doubt less have received corresponding impressions. After Ackerman's defeat Hedges is considered as a fallen man and therefore he is betrayed, but it is truly astonishing how false this kind of persons are to each other.

Letter No 25

Beckett 17th April 1816

My Lord

I wrote your Lordship on the 15th inst. and have not been well enough to resume the subject till this morning. A subject I would not have obtruded on your Lordship only that it develops the measures of a few persons who formed are about to intercept my usefulness and displace me if in their power, and which I might long have had to contend with or silently endure, if they had not precapitulated themselves by their impatience to attain their object. The tenant Ackerman and Hedges the Keeper, a more turbulent tenant than the farmer, and a more treacherous deceitful servant than the latter need never afflicted an estate. Killard is bad enough, but when the other two remove their quarters, I can rain him in well enough. Besides he has a large family. He has had too much power, but when a little farm is taken in to hand from his grounds, the rent of the residue being part on equitable footing he will be furnished with more innocent employment in providing for his family than when his manger was full of corn. A groom raised into property and authority could hardly be expected to conduct himself otherwise than Mr Killard has done, and I wish to ascribe his error not to the kindness of the heart but to the weakness of his head. Ackerman's removal will give general satisfaction to the neighbourhood for his is greatly feared. Hedges' removal will give equal satisfaction to myself for he has always played into the hands of the tenants, tradesmen and work people, at the expense of your Lordship's pocket and I have no questions whatever but he has been equally indulgent to himself and to the interception of some unknown revenue. It is that I ascribe his malevolence to me. A more ***, selfish man never breathed. But I wish neither if these men to be discharged upon so general an accusation as I have had made. In recommending this step to your Lordship it is incumbent on me to make out sufficient grounds for such a recommendation and I have too ample latitude to fail in doing this. I will first dispose of Mr Ackerman. I need not recapitulate any of those circumstances which lead to your Lordship's letter to Mr Ackerman. They must be quite fresh in your Lordship's memory. After this letter was written, I came to a knowledge of the placards and more foul and grossness malice could not devise, taken in conjunction

with the time and circumstances under which they were struck up. One of Mr Ackerman's charges to your Lordship against the steward was that the Cord wood and faggots were not taken away, but lay spread over the ground to the annoyance of the farm. Your Lordship heard what I said in answer to that charge. "A want of market," but I never knew till last night that Mr Ackerman did refuse to suffer any carts or waggons to go into his ground to take the Cord wood and faggots from thence which were actually sold and this too when the weather was fair and the land quite dry. On the 20th February Samuel Streat the Carpenter who superintended the timber follas, and procured pinchions of Cord Wood and Faggots, sold, James Wensley of Highworth 360 Faggots which lay on Ackerman's ground very conveniently situated for a Highworth buyer. But Ackerman would not suffer Wensleys team to enter the ground to lend them away, in consequence Wensley shortly afterwards supplied himself with the faggots from a fall of wood which subsequently came down of Colonel Warnford's. In the month of March last, Streat sold 4 Cords of wood on Ackerman's ground to one Mr Morse of Highworth and when Mr Morse' team came for the wood, Mr Ackerman would not suffer the team to enter the ground although the land was then quite dry; so Mr Morse was obliged to incur the shameful expense of wheeling the whole 4 Cords of wood out of the grounds into the Highworth road with wheelbarrows. After such conduct as this, the charge made on this head came wither very ill grace. The foul placards, the prohibition of James Wensley's team which came for faggots and the obliging Mr Morse to which the Cord wood off the land into the lane are after pieces of information, quite sufficient to cancel favour that was intended Mr Ackerman. Confirmatory of this turbulent despotic dispositions, I beg to name, that lately your Lordship's tenant Mr Giles in cutting one of his hedges contiguous to Mr Ackerman's ground, laid for a while, a part of the thorns on Mr Ackerman's field along the edge of the ditch. For this Mr Ackerman abused Mr Giles and his two bothers, calling them, "three damned Scoundrells," and crowned the insult by sending his team and carting away Mr Giles' thornes to his own depot of fuel. Mr John Fairthorne of one of the most respectable persons in Shrivenham, and perhaps the most wealthy, said to me the other day, it was a most fortunate thing for the neighbourhood that Mr Ackerman has met with a person who had spirit and resolution to keep him within bounds for his hate he has been indurable. His assendency over the fears of the people here is really surprising and Samuel Streat, who is a respectable man as a Carpenter is a strong instance of it, for he durst not tell me concerning Ackerman's

treatment of James Wensley and Mr Morse until he perceived that Mr Ackerman had clipped his own wings. Your Lordship will excuse my entering so much into detail, but when a tenant of some standing and an old servant have to be discharged, the grounds of their discharge cannot be made out too clearly and explicitly. Mr Ackerman cannot be at a loss to find a farm somewhere else and this misfortune may perhaps bring him to reflection and make him a better man ever afterwards. In consequence of this event I propose the following arrangements which I submit to your Lordship for your Lordship's advice and further suggestions, and I do this immediately because I have already had six applications for Ackerman's farm all of them eligible persons. The arrangement I propose has however not had the advantage of my full reflection. It will very probably admit of improvement.

This next page contains many measurements and rental figures for Ackermans and Giles' farms. The way that the author has laid them out make it very difficult to replicate, so we have included the photographs of the page. Merryweather was explaining to Lord Barrington how he intends to remove certain fields from the farms and add them to others as they were very disjointed. Merryweather refers to a map that both he and Lord Barrington have to refer to field names and numbers and farms. Whereas we have found a copy of the map, we have not yet discovered a copy of the key for an explanation of the field numbers.

The accounts books held in the Berkshire County Archive Ref: D/EX52/E1 contains a rent roll based upon a survey by a Mr Barnes in 1811. Here we discover that the farm Ackerman held was Sand Hill Farm.

No	Place	Acre			Roods			Poles			Total Area	Value	£	s	d		
		A	R	P	A	R	P	A	R	P							
	Sherman's Farm contains	93	0	4	40	0	16	25	0	19	158	0	39	47	372	2	0
	plus this I deduct that of St. Madoc							7	3	6	7	3	6	56	21	16	1
		93	0	4	40	0	16	17	1	13	150	1	53		350	5	11
	to this add so much of Giles's present Farms as is comprised in the following numbers on the Map viz. Nos. 63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70	60	3	17	0	0	22	37	2	27	98	2	26		228	12	5
		153	3	21	40	0	38	55	0	0	249	0	19	46	578	18	4
	The fields now forming part of Giles's Farm with the level of liberty is																
1	Common Close				10	1	31							63	32	18	0
8	House and two Paddockes				3	0	38								10	0	0
27	West & Henry Orchard				6	1	4							54	16	18	10
28	Middle & Henry Orchard				7	3	10							54	21	1	11
29	Ditch & Henling				14	1	38							45	32	12	0
36	East & Henry Orchard				7	3	33							54	20	2	7
41	The Ten Acres				10	1	8							42	21	13	7
7					10	1	8	50	0	34					155	5	11
															2149	5	11
	Sherman's Farms contains	93	0	4	40	0	16	25	0	19	158	0	39	47	372	2	0
	Giles's Farms contains	71	0	25	19	0	3	16	37	2	27	158	2	18	287	3	
	Total Present Rent of the two Farms	164	0	29	59	0	3	22	62	3	0	316	3	17	659		

If Mr. [redacted] accept the Farm as at top, which I propose to let him - I need say no more
 I propose to let the two Farms and the house to contain the expense of only a
 [redacted] as much as I can make and into grass as he pleases and acquire by
 new [redacted] to get of Mr. Giles or if not of him of some 2000 lbs, and increase of 10 p
 cent, which will be 57 p cent. 249 0 19 at 57 p cent is £709 19 9

27	Common Close I hope to let for 10 an acre with 10, 1, 31	52	5	0
8	House & two Paddockes	3	0	38
27	West & Henry Orchard at 80 p cent	6	1	4
28-29 & 36	at 55	30	1	31
41	The Ten Acres at 80	10	1	8
72	That of St. Madoc at 80	7	3	6
		98	6	10
	If Mr. [redacted] take Nos. 28-29 & 36 which I propose to let him, I must make it a condition that he give up 91 Abbot's Field & 2, 2, 8 which he has now let but which I hope to let at 80. This will make an increase of Nos. 28 & 36 occupied by Milner I can let at an increased Rent of £300 per annum at will be saved by this arrangement on Giles's Farm and Milner's	14	19	11
		495	8	9
		750	10	4
		248	19	1
		19	10	0
		£365	9	1

I propose to have a good increase from Mr. Bullard, and by accommodating Butler, King, Parry
and Milner with certain exchanges of Land, a tolerable increase of Rent will be obtained there
The Portman waits therefore I prefer writing concerning the above mentioned
I am better to day than any day since I returned home - I have been interrupted many times
I am my God - &c. Landlord to the
J. M. Mansfield

Letter No 26

Beckett 18th April 1816

My Lord

Before I enter upon my accusations of Mr Hedges I will state what has been my own deportment towards him. Then I will lay my charges against him, and if those charges be founded, the only deduction that can be drawn from his behaviour is that I do some how stand in the way, and intercept the revenue of a very craving selfish man who can never forgive me.

On my coming to reside at Beckett last April, Mr Hedges requested he might have the Apples which grew in my garden. I said if the crop proved favourable he should have a fair portion of them and at all events he might plant as much of the garden as would serve his family with potatoes and other vegetables. He planted what part of the garden he chose with potatoes; vegetables he declined, because by long usage he had them from the other garden without the expense of cultivating. He then requested to have the pigeons continued to him, telling me a long history at the same time, how much money he lost by the expense of their keep. I let him have the pigeons at his desire buying such of them as we occasionally wanted at a shilling a couple. And I cannot but here observe that when I was at Beckett about three weeks before in March to meet Mr Davis, there might be about four hundred pigeons, yet at the time he asked me for them, there were only about two hundred. Mr Hedges then said he had been used to have the produce of the Walnut trees which grew of Beckett House, might he still have the Walnuts trees. From the zeal Hedges expressed for the presentation of the game and the fish, I thought him a miracle of a good servant and capable of being turned to many useful purposes. And it was under this impression of him that in May last when I was in London to meet Mr Clarke, I requested of your Lordship not to deprive him of that portion of his salary which he held in consideration of looking after the labourers and the paying of wages. This salary I recollect your Lordship to have stated at 30 guineas over and above his pay as Game Keeper and your Lordship at my suggestion continued this to him. Some time in

the early part of June, when I perceived him and my other neighbour became reconciled together and united against me as I judged; to draw Hedges to second my views and fall into my measures, I acquainted him of his obligation to my representation of him and the advantage which had arisen to him there from. Very recently, when your Lordship proposed to place Hedges in Canfield's house, your Lordship can bear me testimony, I not only made not the slightest representation against the policy of it, but placed Hedges there immediately in obedience to your Lordship's direction. As the last hope of reclaiming Hedges' hostility, I took the merit of this arrangement to myself and Mr and Mrs Hedges being both together I said, "that having purchased Canfield's house it was now in my power to place them comfortably for life. You have your full salary, you have an assistant keeper, your time in a house rent free, your taxes are all paid, you have your fuel for nothing, and as my Lord and Lady will occasionally be here, and the young gentlemen frequently, this will present you with additional advantages. Under all these advantages Mr Hedges it concerns you to study the interest of the good lord from whence they flow, and I hope you will do so." On this I left them. In addition to this statement of my behaviour to Hedges I can truly declare to your Lordship that my address to him has always been affable and obliging, and I have occasionally conferred private favours on him which he must be well assured could proceed from myself alone, and not from your Lordship.

I will now proceed with my charges against Hedges and I will begin with the last first as being of so malignant a nature as to make all the other of no account. Indeed I have nothing criminal to allege against Hedges but this one charge, although the rest taken collectively, show such a defence of displeasure as would point it out very polite to have this man removed and wrapped up with the consensus and people of this estate. I revert to the communication made to my son Horatio by Mr Killard's sons the day before your Lordship left Shrivenham saying that Mr Hedges wished Jonathan Green to inform your Lordship Horatio had attempted to shoot him and that when Green denied he did so, but was only in playfulness and fired into the air, Hedges still enjoined him to go to your Lordship and that Horatio would have to pay him (Green) a large sum of money. I must have acquainted you Lordship that the sons of Mr Killard came down to Beckett House the day following they had given this information and told my son they were only in fun in what they said before and that there was nothing in it. I was well enough in my health

on Monday evening to investigate this business as far as Jonathan Green was concerned in it, and I sent for both him and his wife, wishing her to be present. From the recantation of Mr Killard's sons, I was quite prepared to find an unwilling evidence in Jonathan Green, and I easily penetrated the motive which had induced Mr Killard to utter his original intention of making his own peace by the betraying of Hedges and consequently by acting on his subordinate agents in conformity to his new intentions. The point with me was to obtain of Green an admission of the facts without pressing or at all requiring a knowledge of the party or parties who prompted him to proceed in false accusation. This could best be done by assuming an air of carelessness and inefficiency as if the matter were of no consequence whatever, but a piece of table-talk. After a little preliminary conversation which was of no consequence but to set them at ease with themselves, as to his wife agreeable personal appearance and his own integrity, I narrated the circumstances of his meeting my son on the walk at Beckett with a gun and Horatio's calling out he would shoot him and his firing into the air, Jonathan falling to the ground, his rising from thence, their subsequent chit-chat, and their friendly parting with each other. In all this he concurred over and over again. I applauded him for his honesty in not yielding to the solicitations of those who had wished him to come to your Lordship and represent that Horatio had attempted to shoot him and that he would have a great sum of money of Horatio if he did so. Green in the presence of his wife Mrs Merryweather and the adult part of my family thrice repeated that he told them he could not say so for surely the boy was only in fun and fired into the air. This was so much evidence as I expected from Green, and on my enquiring who it was he was in conversation with on this subject when he said so and so, for the first time he recollected himself that he could proceed no further. He was quite at a dead stand still, and could say neither one thing nor another. Here I pushed and worked him in all forms, but his stupid silence was invincible. I said, "it was Hedges who told him to say so." He immediately and firmly said it was not Hedges. "Very well," said I, "but you were told it was Hedges who wished you to apply to Lord Barrington, and who said you would get a great sum of money from Horatio if you did so." To this he made no answer whatever. There the conversation ended and Jonathan Green and his wife went home.

Under my present disorder, mornings are the feeble part of the day with me, and it is not till eleven or twelve o'clock I am fit for business. Impatient to know the whole history of

this affair, I sent for Mr Killard about twelve o'clock on Tuesday, and I told him the whole circumstances of my son and Green when they met on the walk, his two sons waiting on Horatio the day before your Lordship left Shrivenham, saying what Hedges had wished to persuade Jonathan Green to, the interview I had had with Jonathan Green in the presence of his wife, and I gave him the whole of Green's evidence holding back only that part where Green said it was not Hedges who persuaded him to the step he was urged to take, I then said, ...*missing*... "can you throw any light on this subject?" Mr Killard expressed his ...*missing*... at this account and declined in the most solemn manner and his ... *missing* ... the first ...*missing* ... overheard a syllable of the transaction! "he wished he might ...*missing* ... drawing the edge of his hand across his throat," he hoped his [throat] would be cut if ever he heard a word of it before." There is something so awfully in these appeals to heaven, that inspite of my experience to the contrary I was inclined to acquit Mr Killard of any intelligence on his part in this matter, but after he has gone I was staunch with the improbability I may say impossibility of his not having heard or possessing the slightest knowledge that such circumstances had been spoken of. Mr Killard is a Roman Catholic. I have had the pleasure to have been on the pleasantest footing with certain Roman Catholic gentlemen whose word, much more than their oaths I would place on an equal footing with that of any Protestant on earth. But I confess the lone order of Roman Catholics, especially the uncultivated part of the ***, of whom Mr Killard be one, have very little weight with me in their oaths. At my request Mr Killard's sons came down with their father in the afternoon of the same day, but my paper being exhausted I must defer till tomorrow their evidence having engaged your Lordship's attention so much as my own affair. I will just tell you that I have had Mr Bennett and one of his sons here, a very intelligent, pleasant business like your man with a fine countenance and person. Mr Bennett came into my house soon enough, and his son sufficiently ***. They might be with me an hour or an hour and a half. On awkward occasions of this nature, there is nothing like letting one's opponent spend his shot and then turning him in good humour with himself. I remember Lady Glencairn saying to me, that her brother Tom (the present Lord Erskine) always made sure of his cause if he could make the jury laugh or fall asleep. Mr Bennett having been asleep at least the last 20 years, I determined to move him to my purposes by laughter, in the best way I could. I addressed the reason of the young gentleman who really seemed to have a good shape of mind to address oneself to, and I exercised my rally on the old man's prejudices so to his

satisfaction that I was afraid he would have suffocated with laughing. We all parted in great humour and are to have another interview. There will be a good advance there, but if he keep the farm not so much as I could wish for another tenant.

I am my Lord etc

George Merryweather

Letter No 27

Beckett 19th April 1816

My Lord

I hope to compress the disagreeable subject I am on into the compass of this letter. In my last letter I ought to have said it was on the Thursday and Friday I saw Jonathan Green and Mr Killard and not on the following Monday and Tuesday. When Mr Killard returned with his two sons as I named to your Lordship yesterday, I asked the older boy, "what was the communication he made to Horatio when he called on him some days past for that purpose?" The boy denied he had made any communication whatever, and in this he persisted. Horatio who was present said, "O Richard, how can you deny this, did not you and your brother come to me the day after which I was in the stable and say what you had told me the day before was only in fun?" To this question he would make no answer whatever. After waiting in vain to get an answer from him, I said, "Young man, your father's now under a notice to quit his farm and if you don't say what it was you communicated to Horatio, he shall quit it directly." With astonishing readiness he made answer, "all the boys of the school know of it as well as me, it was the talk there." I asked what was the talk there? He said, "that Mr Hedges had wished Jonathan Green to go to Lord Barrington and say Horatio Meryweather had attempted to shoot him." This my Lord is now the evidence I have collected on the subject. Mr Hedge's sister lives in the school master's house and it is generally understood that the schoolmaster is on the point of marrying Mr Hedge's niece, therefore that is no place to collect evidence, nor is it

necessary. It would be a waste of your Lordship's time for me to point out the concealment of a link of evidence in the instance of Green's deposition. Green generally spoke in the plural number of those who urged him to make the allegiance, yet he said Hedges was not the person. Mr Killard might be the person who was spokesman, and Mr Hedges might be present, or Mr Hedges might be about, but the authority of his name was made use of by Mr Killard and Hedges and Killard are particularly intimate. The solution of Mr Killard's behaviour seems to be this. Mr Bennett having signified to the persons in Mrs Lucas' Bar on his leaving your Lordship, that he was referred entirely to me and Mr Ackerman having come to the worst, Killard being conscious of his plottings against me in conjunction with Hedges, particularly in the attempts on Green; and taking for granted I must be acquainted with a matter which was the conversation of the whole school room, look upon Hedges as a lost man and therefore wished to make his own peace at the expense of Hedges. But finding Hedges remained in what he would deem power, he concluded that I had either made an ineffectual effort to discipline Hedges or that I must not attempt so formidable an assaillment. Under this impression he thought it high time to sing his recantation, seeing Hedges as firmly rooted as one of those Oaks in view of his own window which will furnish an hundred years to come. Hedges own exultation and mockery of me as to the cringing way in which he described me to have approached your Lordship would tend to confirm him in this belief, and therefore it was he sent his sons to Horatio the day of your Lordship's departure to chew their won words, and to say they were only in fun in what they had stated to him the day before. This appears to me the natural deduction from these proceedings or there appears to be a chain and a line of events without a cause. All this however, is fortunately for your Lordship when my humble strength is a little more established so that I can enter into conversation with Mr Killard in the cool and dispassionate manner which I will do, and I trust make him ashamed of himself.

I wrote a note to Mr Berens last Saturday requesting he would do me the favour of a call as I can't go out, that I had a communication to make to him. He called in this afternoon and I told him the whole of Ackerman's matter and his niece's sticking up the gross placards. I then told him of the conspiracy of Hedges and Killard and gave him the evidence in detail as I have given your Lordship. Mr Berens was astonished! I then told Mr Berens that Hedges had been counteracting me ever since last June, the time when I

first set family to work to reclaim this estate and direct its revenues into their proper channel. That Hedges was a sneering insidious man, continually lessening my good name where he dared to do it. That as my conduct had been uniformly kind to him and as I thought also very *** I must certainly draw his enmity upon me by accidentally intercepting some unknown bank of revenue for a more selfish craving man I never saw. Mr Berens thought it might be wounded pride at having to resign his authority. I told him I once thought so too, and to sooth this feeling I made a point to render my deportment very affable to him, but experience had instructed me otherwise, that I was satisfied his soul was incapable of a generous wounded pride, and that he was influenced solely by a rancorous disappointed avarice. Mr Berens said it likely might be so. he thought it might be well if Mr Hedges went to Mongewell and the Mongewell Keeper came to Beckett. I said, "Mr Berens, that would be excellent policy indeed! To clap down at the elbow of the Bishop a sly insidious fox, and bring a person here who at best could be considered as only equivocal. But Mr Berens, let us for a moment suppose Hedges removed to Mongewell, would not something like this arise an uncommon attention to the weak side of an old man, the greatest of men in their strength have their weak side, but old age descends into a second childhood and nothing pleases old people so much as to resort to the good old times, when they had the direction of the world." The Stage depicts this well, when he makes Signior at Asama obscene. In my time peaches were much longer than they are at present, nature degenerates every day. I said to Mr Berens, Hedges would practice on this infirmity of old age and I thought Mongewell the very last place in the world where he ought to go to. That Hedges must have feathered his nest pretty well. This Mr Berens admitted as probable. Well then, said I, let him purchase an annuity for his own and Mrs Hedges lives, seeing they have no children, and if Lord Barrington allow the ten or twelve pounds a year in addition during pleasure and on condition they go to reside in Wiltshire or Gloucestershire not within ten miles of Shrivenham, for as long as they remain at Shrivenham the minds of the tenants of Lord Barrington will always be kept in a feverish state. I then told Mr Berens what Mr Crowdy had stated at the Michaelmas Court in my presence, namely, that he had just been informed while he stepped out of the room, that Mr Merryweather had said this was the last time that he (Mr Crowdy) should hold that court. I assured Mr Crowdy that I had not only never said so, but it have never entered with my heart to think so, and that I was persuaded he would conduct the business of that court at all times so much to the

satisfaction of Lord Barrington that he would not only hold the court during my time, but many years after I was dead and gone. Mr Crowdy observed to the company that, "this was one of the thousand lies that was going about." I was not aware till this declaration that any lies were going about. But who could be the author of them? Certainly no one but Hedges, a man who entertained the village a whole fortnight at my expense with his drollery, because when some refuse wood was ordered by me to be cut up for billet wood for sale, the men said they would "Cord it." The term is local and technical and because I did not know what it meant, I was held as a fool. But the sore place was, that the wood which heretofore issued to ... *missing* ...without feet, was now preserved to its proper owner. I suppose there ...*missing*... twenty pounds worth of it the last year. My Lord, were I to pursue this ...*missing*... write daily for a fortnight to come. I will resume it only on your Lordship's ...*missing*... Hedges was here last night and I paid him his salary up to the time saying he might hold himself discharged until he heard further which would be in the course of a week or ten days, when he would either resume his office or know what he was to do. He admitted he had often talked foolishness of me but he did not suppose that could do me any hurt. I told him I was nothing obliged to his intentions for that, and that any thing coming from him, a man notorious for his sneering term might lose much of its effect, yet droppings from the house top did at last perforate and wear out the hardest pebble below. I have taken the liberty to forward to your Lordship a few letters which I once received from my excellent father, at a period of great trouble. I have the honour to say, I was educated under a foundation in my principles of conduct by the writer of these letters. If I at all resemble the author of these papers, no wonder I became subject to the reviling of a few disappointed persons, in the reclaiming of this estate. I am favoured with your Lordship's letter of the 16th, and Canfield's house shall be fitted up as your Lordship directs. The bed rooms are 9ft 5ins high. The bed room in which Miss Canfield's bed now stands is 9ft 2ins and the front room which will contain the library 9ft 8ins. The person to whom we are likely to sell the timber says he will give £3 a foot for the Oak, and £1 for the Elms. Probably I may get a little more for the Elm. Elms of good quality retailed out a few trees together may bring £1 to £1.10s. Trees which have been injured by standing are worth £1 to £1.4s. I thank your Lordship for the piece of lead, it will be useful.

I am my Lord etc. George Merryweather

Letter No 28

Beckett 23rd April 1816

My Lord

An arrangement has been come to with Mr Hedges which I hope will be satisfactory to your Lordship and do me favour with Mr & Mrs Berens. It also sets my own mind at ease. In the confidence of your Lordship's protection, I have dared to sustain my own honour and that having been done, I am incapable of further resentment. Things remain as they were, only that Hedges gives up £15 a year of that portion of his salary which he had for superintending workmen and paying wages. Mr & Mrs Berens represent to Mr Hedges and his wife how very improper his treatment of me has been, and caution him against the like in future. Indeed Hedges has not got any honour among his neighbours in this conflict, and his behaviour towards me is much blamed by reflecting persons. I am of opinion, this is the last thing I shall have to contend with in this way, and I should have been sorry if I had appeared faint and deficient of spirit. Hedges has £50 a year as Game Keeper. His house rent, taxes, fuel etc and he is considered to be worth less than a thousand pounds himself. I do sincerely ask your Lordship's pardon for having exceeded the bounds of my province, but I acted under the impression of a great and unreserved injury. I trust to providence and your Lordship and the kindness of your Lordship's family towards me to guard me against injuries from this person in future.

Mr & Mrs Berens were here yesterday and the evidence was gone through which I have given your Lordship. They both wish to think Hedges clear of the conspiracy, but whatever may be the case with Mrs Berens, Mr Berens I am well assured, rather wishes it, than thinks it. He could not get Jonathan Green to make oath as to the parties who wished him to make his charge. Green objected to this on the ground of his being a scholar. As to Mr Ackerman's, Mr Berens is quite satisfied on the score of evidence and he sees his discharge as a most natural result. I must candidly own, I have not the merit of Hedges' continuance but with your Lordship's permission I should wish it to be considered so in this village.

When the system of Locksmiths work was explained to me at Birmingham, it became indispensable for me to state that the suit of locks were for a nobleman's house etc, but I will take care they come in as low as if no such explanation had been necessary. Neither live nor dead stock will be required for our farms immediately. I will apprise your Lordship of this in due time.

I am your Lordship etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 29

Beckett 24th April 1816

Mr Lord

I yesterday wrote your Lordship concerning the winding up of an unpleasant matter. Today I write your Lordship on points of business. I have prevailed with Mr Butler to relinquish his ploughing land as being very injurious to him. This will put him on grass land altogether and if he will henceforward act prudently, he may gain a fair and decent livelihood. Both his habits and those of Mr Johnsons are such that in respect to them both, this is a matter to be wished rather than expected. I have not obliged nor constrained Mr Butler to come into my views, but I have taken a great pains to induce him to see with my eyes, which he does now fully. This morning I have let Mr Butler's arable land to another tenant of safe property to be entered on at Michaelmas. The fields on the map are 260, 263, 265. The present rate of £49.3.0. I have let them for £65.4.9 making a difference of £16.1.9, but I allow £15 to get them into order for the large field of 34 acres is in a shocking condition for Butler's want of capitol. This morning I have sold 5,000 bushels of

Lime and I have received an order for 40,000 bricks and 40,000 Tiles with proportionate quantity of Lime.

My Lord, my recent struggle here has the unqualified approbation of my own judgement. It will have done a great deal of good, and have put things on the right footing. The advantage is your Lordship the *** my own. I have transgressed the limits of my authority, but I had acted with zeal for your Lordship, and have to request your Lordship will allow me with Mr & Mrs Berens and my neighbours the whole merit and demerit of the transaction. This is an earnest request on my part for the protection of my honour.

To your Lordship I must in honestly disclaim the merit of Hedges remaining here and I say it with great deference. I think I am under correct judgement in this point, but now that all goes on again in the old way. I am from policy so far obliged to better myself as to request your Lordship will allow me to stand to the whole transaction from beginning to end.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 30

Beckett 10th May 1816

My Lord

I have to acknowledge the receipt of you Lordship's letter of the 18th April returning the assessed paper, also your Lordship's letters of the 21st, 23rd and 28th April. I am pleased that I had anticipated your Lordship's pleasure in respect to Hedges, in which matter assuredly had precipitated myself into an error by exceeding the bounds of my province, but seeing your Lordship has carried it off in a way so indulgent to myself I am glad it has happened, for your Lordship's Steward is now freed from the secret interference of a sorry and selfish rival and hence forth I can move forward with my wheels

disencumbered and unclogged. Your Lordship will also have gained a dutiful keeper who will perceive it his real interest to do as he ought to do, and will, with the transient aid of an assistant keeper of my appointing during the shooting season, manifest to your Lordship how much you may extend your favours of game to your friends in London, without impairing the proper quantity which is desirable to keep up on the estate. If Hedges fall in cheerfully with the arrangement I have just named in his department, I would beg of your Lordship to continue to have his salary of £65 a year undiminished. And your Lordship will be the better enabled to do this because I trust by Lady Day next your rents here from land and houses will commence at a thousand a year higher than when I came to Beckett, and this too without hardship in any instance or causing an inconvenient pressure. There will then remain many farms untouched, and which must be made available for future increase of revenue, as opportunity shall invite.

The purpose of this letter is to lay down to your Lordship my intended arrangements in respect to Ackerman's and Killard's farms that I may have the advantage of any suggestions which shall arise from your Lordship more perfect knowledge in these things. But I beg first to reply to my Lady Barrington's instructions concerning the furniture at Canfield's. The beds which will be applicable for the servants will do well enough in respect to feather beds, pillows and bolsters. To perfect the appointments of these beds there will require new curtains for one of them, the present curtains being little better than rags. This is a small bed calculated for only one person. She will want three single blankets, also sheets, pillow and bolster slips for the whole. The bed steads are in a craggy state, but they shall be well braced and repaired. I will get a straw bed and mattress for the bed stead bought of Canfields, but does my Lady mean the mattresses to be of straw, flocks or hair and of flecks whether white or coloured flocks? I cannot receive instructions on this point too soon. I now revert to the main object of this letter. I have before me a copy of the arrangement of Giles and Ackerman's which I sent to your Lordship on the 19th April and to which I beg to refer to your Lordship. I have proposed to deduct from Ackerman's farm the field number 72 on the map called "Hall Pit Meadow," 7a 3r 2p. In my copy, I see this field is called No 73. Perhaps this error in the number may be a undue hand in transcribing the statement set to your Lordship but if not then the number rendered to your Lordship as No 73 should be No 72. This error being satisfied, no further improvement has occurred to me hitherto on the original

arrangement and I have given it my best consideration. As my plans cannot be brought to bear without the concurrence of Mr Giles a notice to quit which I am desirous to avoid if possible, I have endeavoured to form his mind to my own views of the subject by having conversations with him on different evenings at my own house after the cares of the day were over. We have spent three evenings this way with intervals between. On the first interview, he expressed himself high gratified with the arrangement of the lands intended for the new farm, and when I left him I intended it for himself the compliments he poured forth on my discernment etc were such as no modest man can name on his own behalf. He saw nothing but wealth flowing into himself from a farm so much enlarged, so nicely rounded off, subject to one house keeping instead of two, disencumbered of £20 a year in taxes and from the unnecessary expense of four houses and their attendants. These savings we both agreed were on the most modest computation £260 a year and an admission on the part of Mr Giles often confirmed by him, that the straggling about the village now forming a part of his farm, would on his translation lose their value to him and be of no consideration. They also bear the highest rent for which he would have a proportional deduction. Our second interview was quite as pleasant as the first. We recapitulated the saving, namely £120 a year on four houses and their attendants, £20 a year in taxes and assessments, £120 a year on the most moderate calculation for house expenses of Mr Ackerman's family, thus forming a total of £260 a year, exclusive of the profit which on tolerable years Mr Ackerman might fairly be supposed to be by against the autumn and winter of life. Our third interview was a week after the second, by which time I thought Mr Giles would have had abundance of time to have formed a perfect judgement of the subject of our conversations. The same topic was now over again with the same complaining and admission and with this further admission (which for the first time I then introduced) that both his farm (Giles') and Ackerman's were nicely rented. Mr Giles has observed that he was afraid it would be difficult if not impracticable to come to the proposed arrangement for Mr Ackerman was determined to write the Bishop of Durham and that in the course of three days. I said, "I will soon set Mr Ackerman's application to rest by letting you the farm this very evening." We have calculated the saving at £260 a year on the most moderate computation by the two farms being in one hand. We will give half of this sum to Lord Barrington as an increase of rent, and the other half you shall have as an increase in profit, over and above we will favour you as tenant by throwing into your scale all the

lie-by profit that Mr Ackerman may occasionally make. This arrangement seemed to please Giles much and he concurred in it wholly. The plain common sense of the case brought him to this conclusion. He has fell on a calculation to find how much of his new farm would stand him to an acre and when he found the amount of one, a sum to which he was quite unfamiliarised, he shrank back frightened, saying he durst not give the rent, that he would remain as he was. I represented to him it mattered not whether the rent was five farthings or five pounds an acre on the advance if all his admissions were true, which I know them to be. Giles locality, which never carried him over his own dunghill and his excessive selfishness which draws all his interests within a circle of two feet diameter, of which he himself is the centre, incapacitate him for wavering out of his own mode. Not to go into all the unmeaning conversation which passed with Giles, but to be brief and waste you Lordship's time no longer, I told Mr Giles that both on his own admissions twenty times repeated, and on my own clear judgement of the matter, I could not in fidelity of your Lordship place the new rent at a lower pitch, and that if from his tenacity and selfishness he opposed a bar to my arrangement, I must however reluctantly I feel it my duty to give him notice to quit. At the same time I assured him it would be grievous to your Lordship that he should be so much wanting to himself as to decline what would henceforward be the most compact farm on the estate. Giles is taking a little time to consider of my proposal. Meanwhile I have had eight applications from eligible persons for Ackerman's farm. If Giles should be so much under the influence of his capacity as to refuse the new farm, I have persons ready to accept it on these terms. In this case I can let the odds and ends and pairings of Giles' present farm at an increase of £110 a year as I before stated to your Lordship in my letter of the 17th April, and accommodate the wants and necessities of the whole village. But Giles will know than to decline my offer and as corn has advanced within the ten shillings a bushel I will press him to a conclusion as soon as he returns from London where he now is on a visit to his sister who was lately married. If any thoughts occur to your Lordship to improve me on this point of Giles, I hope to be obliged with them by your Lordship at an early opportunity. I must write concerning Killard's farm the morrow as the Post Man has been sometime in the waiting and my paper is gone. Giles' business. I have let Canfield's Faxter Garden to Mr Haynes at £3 a year and the barn to Mr Wrighton at £4 a year. They are both quiet people, persons of good property and have no children. I have reduced

less Sly's unnatural and undeserved wage £7.1s a year, and instead of his being an heirloom, he is employed at the new wage only when he is really wanted.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 31

Beckett 11th May 1816

My Lord

I wrote to your Lordship yesterday concerning the farms of Mssrs Ackerman and Giles. I now submit to your Lordship's consideration the arrangement I propose in respect to Mr Killard's farm and when I receive your Lordship's instructions I will immediately proceed upon them or by further delay Mr Killard may think himself not timely informed. By reference to the account No 3 entitled, "Geo Merryweather's specification of the farms and a corrected Rent Roll as it stands at Michaelmas 1815." Your Lordship will see Mr Killard's farm to consist of 245a 1r 24p viz 32a 3r 1p of Arable; 98a 0r 17p of Pasture and 114a 2r 6p of Meadow. The rent for this farm according to Mr Barnes' valuation, when his arithmetic is corrected is £541.11. In consequence of Killard's interference with Thos Rich's bargain for Canfield's land, I added £18.13.9. to the aforementioned rent, but for the present I wave this additional rent of £18.3.9 and proceed on the £541.11. To do your Lordship justice and to be equitable to a managing tenant I should add the £100.8 to the rent of this farm, thus making a new rent of £642, being an increase of 8 shillings an acre on the whole of Mr Killards present farm. The farm that it will be convenient for your Lordship to take into hand will be what was before in hand, and which was subsequently added to Killards farm by Mr Price, viz ...

which was subsequently added to Killard's farm by

No. Survey	Stable	Pasture	Meads	Total	Acres	Roods	Furlongs	
8 In Shurlong			10	3	36		60	
92 Brown Hill	12	1	14				47	
93 Quarry Ground	5	1	26				47	
94 The Paddock			2	1	14		44	
95 Dungs Field	9	1	32				47	
96 Field adjoining New Stables	5	2	9				47	
	32	3	1	13	1	10	46	
							0	
							11	
							106	
							14	
							10	
Incess of Rent outside the Survey of 5/11 on the Farms in Hand							18	8
							0	
							54	6
							12	5
							7	10
							5	1
							11	6
							106	14
							10	
							43	4
							11	8
							8	5
							8	4
							52	0
							0	0

The Total of Killard's Farms at present is

32	3	1	98	0	17	114	2	6	268	1	26	5	1	11	6
----	---	---	----	---	----	-----	---	---	-----	---	----	---	---	----	---

From which deduct the Farms above in Hand

32	3	1	0	0	0	15	1	10	46	0	11	106	14	10	
----	---	---	---	---	---	----	---	----	----	---	----	-----	----	----	--

To the above add 5/11 on Acre, or in round numbers

0	0	0	98	0	17	101	0	36	199	1	13	43	4	11	8
---	---	---	----	---	----	-----	---	----	-----	---	----	----	---	----	---

Grand Total 573

52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Killard is under notice to quit in consequence of his interference with Rich's bargain just before last Michaelmas, so that the above arrangement can take place from Lady Day last, we pitching on two impartial persons to value the crop on the arable land now to be given up. That valuable plot of ground containing about 36 acres which lies scattered between the farms of Giles and Ackerman and which I told your Lordship Mr Berens said tempted him more than anything else to a breach of the commandment, "thou shalt not covet," is now to be sold. I am very desirous on your Lordship's account that this ground should be bought by negotiation and not by public sale. It is a piece of the best ground in the Parish and the amount is within the reach of many competitors. This ground belonged to a person of the name of Wirdnam who has been dead two or three years. The Trustees are Mr James Fidel of Faringdon and Mr John Fairthorne of Shrivenham. Mr John Fairthorne farms the land at a rent and he also has a mortgage upon it. Thus circumstanced Mr Fairthorne might be a very awkward man to contend with. Fairthorne is rich and although a quiet man, he is very pig-headed and obstinate when it occurs to him to be so. He now farms a field of your Lordship's called Abbotts Hill. I propose to let him Nos 28, 29, 36, quantity 30a 1r 31p now forming a detached part

of Giles' farm and adjoining to grounds held by Fairthorne. This will be an offer pleasant and acceptable to him. We never shall get hold of Wirdnam's land at anything like a reasonable price if we attempt to wrest it as a farm out of Fairthorne's hands. I would therefore let him continue to farm it at its present rent with an assurance of his continuing to do so, if as the tenant he treat it justly. If we can purchase it to pay £3.1/3 or even £3 percent at its present rents, we may almost take for granted it will be a good purchase. Mr Fidel is gone from home a week so that I cannot come at particulars. If we can get it to pay £31 1/3 percent at the rent Mr Fairthorne now gives, I have little doubt but on Fairthorne's death it would let to pay £5 percent. It is very probable too that under this arrangement, Fairthorne would suffer his money to continue at interest with your Lordship. The other Trustee Mr Fidel, is altogether in your Lordship's interest, and will serve you as far as he can conscientiously. I have not heard one syllable concerning Mr Atkinson nor his plans nor specification since your Lordship left us. I dare say your son will find his hands full of that one engagement, for Mr Atkinson will render these things with the greatest possible reluctance, and with the affectation of a thousand engagements to prevent him. Tomorrow I shall write your son for such articles as are to be sent for Canfield's house. On the opposite side I have taken the freedom to draw out a copy of the accounts which by your Lordship's instructions I sent to Mr Belby in March 1815. If your Lordship refer to my general last accounts which I sent to your Lordship in February last, you will perceive I have there given your Lordship credit for £3, £20 and £50 incurred of your Lordship which I received before I came to Beckett, so that the sum I have had of the Hon, The Dean, Bishop of Durham against my accounts at £20 leaving £52.13 remaining due to me. If your Lordship receive this amount and place it to my account it will be right. My daughter in copying my accounts to your Lordship has made the entry £12 instead of £20 to your Lordship's credit May 23rd 1815, and the balance of the account is your Lordship's favour £498.5.11½ with the rectification of this error it will be £506.5.11½.

No formal sign off

Letter No 32

Beckett 11th June 1816

My Lord

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's letters of the 16th May and the 7th inst. As I shall write your Lordship fully on many matters in the course of the week, I will at present confine myself to the subject of the intended new Mansion House, just observing however that everything here proceeds to my wish and expectations and my business rolls finely favoured right afore me.

The person I hoped to have returned as an assistant in superintendancy the new house cannot be had. The best step to be adopted would be to have the Clerk of Works mentioned to your Lordship by the Bishop of Durham.

If an architect have the constraint of a building by himself or by his Prime Minister, the Clerk of the Works, the expense will exceed all bounds. The commissions which those gentlemen think them selves justified to accept, are in some instances to a quadruple, and the more many a building costs, the greater latitude for this kind of pillage. I can myself as Steward have any commission. I please to name on almost every article and every species of labour that is connected with such a building. Mr Crowdy's son has just called upon me with another gentleman on some business between Mr Blgrave and Mr Dixon and the Post Man also waits. I can however have nothing more to add in this subject but what will readily occur to your Lordships's mind

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 33

Beckett 18th June 1816

My Lord

I wrote your Lordship the 11th and I designedly confined myself to one subject. I intended to have written your Lordship again last Friday, but I read a letter from the Timber Agent for Larkin's House, that he would be with me that day on the afternoon. He did not come. Saturday is always a day of many interruptions, and Monday (yesterday) was particularly so, by reason of it being the Revel. I have today received a letter from the Timber Agent saying he will be here at 2 o'clock and he directs me to order a dinner at Mrs Lucas'. This is impossible on account of the Revel. I have to occupy myself with preparation for this gentleman at my own home against he come, and I assign this circumstance as the occasion of the brief manner in which I must name to your Lordship the subjects of my communication in this letter.

My Lady Barrington's instructions in respect to Mattress, Bolsters etc. are fulfilled. Canfield's house is finished as far as your Lordship gave directions. I have confined myself to effect dampness and cleanliness and your Lordship will find nothing there beyond neatness and simplicity. It pleases everybody and particularly Mr and Mrs Berens (as I am told). Before any furniture whatever be ordered I wish to give fresh and perfectly accurate dimensions of the rooms.

Your Lordship wishes me to state my qualifications to undertake the charge of building the new Mansion House and also to send this statement through Mr Durell. I know I fell my competency to this object with such aid as I can obtain and over which I will severally maintain an entire control and ascendancy which shall better be understood than felt by those my aids, but how my Lord can I set down to write my own panegyric. Besides I might manage it as fully I might put forth my strength and conceal my weakness. Would it not be better that I should have a personal intercourse with Mr Durell and cover some

business or other and he can avail himself of that opportunity to broach me. His questions resting entirely with himself, and my answers having to be immediate and spontaneous will instantly detect my unfitness or place me in his good opinion. Besides I have heard an extraordinary account of Mr Durell and from so many quarters that I have an ardent desire to be acquainted with him. It is a delight to me to be acquainted with men of Mr Durell's abilities, and I could walk a hundred miles on foot to spend a long evening in company of such a person. Can I meet him at Oxford my Lord? I have business there.

I do admire the affrontery of Mr Atkinson in representing to the Bishop of Durham that he cannot proceed a step farther in his plans unless he appoint a Clerk of the Works! Sundry plans and perfect one too, must precede not only Clerk of the Works, but every other measure connected with a building. What is this mighty thing that is wanted from Mr Atkinson? And over which half the summer has been lost. I dare engage Mr Berens (who is a good draftsman) would have both devised and executed the plans in four hours. I am no draftsman myself, but I have a perfect conception of what is wanted. There is something very fine in the name of an architect and a great deal that is immediately expensive. I do not mean such architects as Sir Christopher Wren, but the immense small fry of architects which does now abound.

My Lord the rest of my letter must be compressed. Bennett's farm which was £540 per year from Lady Day will be £650. The new farm arising out of Ackerman's and part Giles will be £130 more than heretofore. The panicking's of Giles' farm will let according to my expectations. The field No 72 - 7a 3r 6p in Ackerman's farm at 56/- I have let at 100/- per acre. I can let Giles' house, now at £10 at £50 per year. I have let No 7 - 10a 1r 31p now let 63/- at 100/- per acre. No 27 - 6a 1r 4p now at 54/- at 100/- per acre. No 41 - 10a 1r 8p now at 42/- at 100/- per acre. Crooks leaves his home £22.10s to go to live near Marlborough. I have let it for £24 with the assistance of a little Faringdon gravel on the walks. Wirdnam's 36 acres will be bought to pay your Lordship on its present rent of £3 to £3.10s an acre. Your son has written me his consent to sell Bourton and Fernham. Four different interests have to be conciliated and gained in the instance of Wirdnam's purchase of 36 acres and ... *missing* ... this an especial attorney. He must be employed in this instance ... *missing* ... will sell it acre by acre by an auction. That part of Killard's

farm which ... *missing* ... in land is now in hand again at a fair valuation. His mind is prepared and expect an advance from next Michaelmas on the remainder. I propose this advance to be £80. To have advanced it from Lady Day last, would have borne the appearance of stealing a march upon him. I propose hence forward to allow Hedges £50 a year on your Lordship's account and £15 on Mr Dixon's account. He will drive all Mr Dixon's game into your Lordship's estate, but Mr Dixon must have game when he wants it, which will not be often. Robert Sly has 15/- a week. Hedges had very unnecessarily advanced him to 18/-. He did not officiate as a Carpenter but as an additional assistant Game Keeper. Mr Bennett has bought a house in Shrivensham for £450, in comparison of any other house in the town very dear. If the bill sent by the Chapter of Durham be paid, and your Lordship have lost it, I will have nothing for it. I hope the new house will now go forward. If your Lordship do not receive the £10,000 down immediately from the Bishop of Durham, but only £2,000 a year, the Bishop should be reminded by your Lordship that the dead stoole always about the place in preparation and seasoning will amount to £2,000 more, so that he ought to give your Lordship not £2,000 but £4,000 at the offset. This is only a props-consideration. Mrs Merryweather, as well as myself is extremely obliged by your Lordship's kind and condescending enquiry after her. She had a daughter the middle of last month, and she and the child are doing well. I have now had seven sons and seven daughters. I hope my dear *** father's prayer will help us through. The timber gentleman is come.

No formal finish.

Letter No 34

This letter from George Merryweather to Lord Barrington, begins at the bottom of a letter that Merryweather has received from a B. Woodroffe, who is touting for business with the building of the new Mansion House.

Newbury 24th June 1816

Dear Sir

Understanding Lord Barrington's house is going to be rebuilt, and as I flatter myself I could transact the business in the plumbing, Glazing and Painting line, in the best manner and at the lower prices than is usually charged in that neighbourhood, having such entirely to yourself, I beg leave to solicit your favours thereon and you may rely (in that case) of my giving satisfaction to his Lordship in the work and particularly so to yourself.

The gentleman who is kind enough to be the bearer if this (Mr Dixon) and who I believe will recommend me to you and Mr Merryweather, will add testimony to my assertions. Your thus obliging me will be considered an additional favour which with gratitude will be acknowledged.

Remaining Sir, your very humble servant. B. Woodroffe

George Merryweather writes at the bottom;

I have a letter from Mr Durell of the 10th inst. I meet him at Abingdon by appointment on the 23rd. It would be a fortunate circumstance if Mr Atkinson's plans could be with me a day or two before our interview. I am grieved to have given your Lordship so much trouble concerning the bill. I had lost all recollection of the receipt and appropriation of that bill. It came to hand just as I was leaving Manchester. I got it discounted by Mr Taylor, gave Mrs Merryweather the amount to discharge her obligations, took a copy

of the bill on the envelope of your Lordship's letter which conveyed the bill to me, and in the multifarious employment of so considerable a removal, lost all recollection of the transaction, but I dare say your Lordship will find an acknowledgement of the receipt of it in some letter from me about that time. I should not have been able you give you Lordship this account of the bill, only that I have referred to your Lordship's correspondence, and find your Lordship's statement confirmed with the additional combination of the copy of the bill in the back of your Lordship's letter.

All is going on well here.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather.

Letter No 35

Beckett 2nd July 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 22nd inst. and it has not been in my power until today to write anything conclusive concerning the Timber. As Timber is greatly depressed in price and dreary, I durst not take any steps until the agent for the naval purchase had inspected our stock and the lateness of the Spring deferred the commencement of the fall of Oak Timber a full month beyond the usual period, so that we have only just done this employment. I have sold all the Oak which is applicable to naval purposes at £3 per cubic foot where it lies. I believe this higher sold than any in the neighbourhood. Fifty foot of Oak cost 14/- land carriage and £2.17s water carriage to London. Government want no Elm, but in any instance when they have been obliged to buy Elm for the sake of the bark the agent has invariably offered the Elm to anyone at £1.8s a foot. The expense of conveying it to London is the same as the Oak. I have made a reserve of such portion of the best Elm as I choose to select and I have sold the residue to the agent at £1. 8s but he is not obliged to take any of the meaner sort. The meaner sort

consists of Elms which have been rendered scrubbed by being much lopped; by being made pollards; by growing on hollow banks, where one half of the roots has wanted nourishment; where they have been overtopped by other trees; been nailed to for mending posts,; or rotted by age. The Ash not being a naval timber is not treated for. We are now measuring the timber off, which is sold agreeable to the above statement. The residue I will have collated to some central or convenient situation in each farm where it grows, have it marked off and valued at those different depots for public sale, and any tree which we think does not go at its value we will retain for domestic purpose. I will agree with each farmer to being the logs on his farm to the timber yard at Beckett at so much a waggon. I said and will see that the waggons be sufficiently loaded. I think the timber that will stick on land including the logs will not amount to less than £700 or £800 and as this will apply to the new house and other houses, the Bishop of Durham may make his advance on this stock to be doing with. I judge the quality which will apply to naval purposes will be about £1200 and that which will remain for county sale about £500. The bark will be worth about £300 or £350. Bark was uncommonly low this year £5 to £5.10s a ton for bark of maiden trees. Wantage Bank has stopped payment and it is said its concerns will wind up very ill. The notes it had in circulation here were as three or four to one of any other bank, and I am afraid great distress will ensue in consequence.

I propose the rent day to be the first week in August. Mr Davis always said Mr Butler would have to quit his farm and it will have to be so, though without loss to your Lordship. He is under an inveterate habit of intoxication which places him in a continued state of stupification. He has no money, his stock is constantly diminishing, he had not the means of cultivating his arable land. He collects the cow dung off the pastures in the greatest quantity. Lucas dries it in the hedges it in the hedges and converts it into fuel. The fine double hedges plated by your Lordship are all cut down to the ground and carried off for fuel. And the general management daily becomes worse. I have always been quite frank and without reserve to Mr Butler on these points and told him what they must inevitably lead to. He is a good natured man, has a large family, and has been long on his farm. If he is wound up soon he will have nothing. This is not the fault of the farm, for it is worth more money than he gives for it. But nothing can answer under such mismanagement. Mrs Johnson's management is still worse. Her men never can so any good for themselves if they had farms rent free. I notice all the points of your Lordship's

letter for which I am obliged to your Lordship. It will give me great pleasure indeed to have an interview with Mr Durell. I feel quite easy as to the management of Mr Atkinson, but it will be by far the best way for your Lordship to have nothing to do with him, in anything beyond his plans. The indelicacy, I should say indecency with which he treats the Bishop of Durham, his Patron, in respect to his plans, speaks volumes. A Clerk of the Works is only a fine name for a good practical joiner of *** or business, but it gives an imaginary importance and value, in most cases to men low enough, and ignorant enough, and being then £50 a year more pay than they could otherwise obtain. In great operations and a great building, I have always thought we are too diffident of ourselves and are ready to delegate our business to persons who assume the name of a profession without having had one half the opportunities for improvement which have accrued to ourselves. These persons are very carefree in their places, but in most instances, they should rank much lower that they effect to do.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather.

Letter No 36

Beckett 16th July 1816

My Lord

I have your Lordship's letters of the 8th and 10th inst. I expect the Timber Agent daily when I will get a bill of him and remit it to your Lordship. The rents I will take to your Lordship's bankers in town. In August I shall have a bill for the Oak Bark. I shall sell the remainder of the timber as quickly as a circumscribed country stand will admit of it without undue sacrifice. There will still remain timber enough to bring the whole estate in to order. The logs and the residue of the faggots and billets or cord wood (as it is here called) must be collected and brought home for future sale, when the stuff of this sort

which is already sold is seen off. So many falls of wood have taken place the last year in Berkshire that there is no demand whatever for fine wood on the line of the canal. That, and the home consumption are the only two markets we have to look to. If this fire wood remain squandered in the fields, it will continually diminish by pilferage. The billet wood and faggots are sold on a long credit, so that I have not received £20 on this account. Coals are now in reality so much cheaper than firewood at the price which it sells for that nothing but a long usage of fire wood and the convenience of credit would carry it off. This fall of timber soon and later will bring money and fill gaps to the amount of £3,000 and to a person not very conversant with the estate, it would puzzle him to miss it. But the renovation of the house property will be manifest to every one. As the Bishop of Durham presses your Lordship on this new house and taking into contemplation the largeness of your Lordship's family, which must ever be sending your Lordship's hand into your pocket, I am solicitous that the Bishop, who has no family at all, should have the merit of the whole expense as in truth he ought to have. Since my first coming to Beckett I have always seen it in this point of view and I have been careful of each step I have taken leading to it. In a little time I believe Mr Berens will be quite of the same sentiments. I will make quite sure of Mr Durell's favourable disposition and as to Mr Atkinson, however awkward and untractable his disposition, we shall soon find ourselves on agreeable and good terms, for he will discern no rival architect in me, but a man sensible of his merits in that way and ready to appreciate them. At the same time he will find a firm but invisible barrier to all commissions or profits on the labouring side etc, etc. It is not merely those commissions and sub-commissions that afflict a large house in the expense of it, but it is the extravagance and waste which is carried out in the materials, the labourage and everything connected with it for the commission of percentage to the architect, and also to his under stoppers is rendered to their importance only in the degree that they can encourage waste and expense on every article on which they receive accounts. To effect this, the conscience needs no *** alarm by a direct and positive agreement with the parties who furnish the materials and labour. The operative people can push on their interests most effectually under a willing blindness on the part of the chief contender and he reconciles himself to receive his stopholders commission on the amount of their respective bills, without having to change his conscience as to the items of these bills for he is purposely ignorant of them. Even before the foundation of this structure is dug, the direct and indirect approaches or corruption are disgusting and

afflictive. Our Yorkshire Horse dealers, are reputed to be men to whom one may make a bold off hand proposal, but I do think the mystery of horse-dealing is not equal to the mystery of banking. Noblemen's houses, the very people who are supposed to be well with one are assailed for their influence so that commissions can be received that are quite unsuspected and invisible. I cannot refrain in closing your Lordship a letter addressed to Mr Jas Fidel of Faringdon in this way. To understand the farce of this letter, it is necessary your Lordship should know that Mr Fidel generally employed in measuring off wants and valuing it, in this part of Berkshire and on this decision the bill is paid by the gentleman whose house had been built. I got a glance of this letter and would not return it. I have a letter to myself from the same person, but as the ground was not ascertained ... *missing* ... he is a little more on the reserve with me. A sly ... *missing* ... deals in Bath Stone and who tells me married a relation of ... *missing* ... Durham has made me a personal call. As God is my judge I do not name these things to your Lordship, to obtain any little inward of merit with your Lordship, for the merit of not being a great rogue can add little to a man's escutcheon, but I name them in anticipation of great number of complaints against me, and which will come to your Lordship through the strongest quarters they can devise. In my own subsequent defence, (if I could bring my spirit down to it) I could feel disposed to appear half a rogue to encourage these various persons to put down their proposals to me in black and white, but ever to those fellows I cannot for a moment appear equivocal. In the re-letting of Bennett's farm, I had a shameful offer made to me and when that would not do (for the salving of my conscience) it was proposed the pasture should be given to one of my sons.

No formal sign off

Letter No 37

Beckett 1st August 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 19th July on my return from Abingdon after my interview with Mr Durell, but I hope it was not likely I should commit myself with either Mr Durell or Mr Berens on the point wherein your Lordship gives me a caution. I should have written your Lordship more immediately after this interview than I have done, only that I was in daily expectation of a bill on account of timber, which I received yesterday, and today another on account of Bark. I propose to write your Lordship tomorrow fully on the subject of the new house and of my interview with Mr Durell. This is Rent Day and from such tenants as have hitherto appeared, the returns have been well paid. Many of them are at Wantage today proving their debts at the Bankers there so I shall not see them until this evening or tomorrow, or Saturday. I propose to pay your rents into Moreland & Co.

The timber will not be removed off the estate there two months, the Elm probably not for twelve months. I will thank your Lordship to acknowledge the receipt of the two inclosed drafts, but this need not be done by return of Post, only when your Lordship shall have received my letter, which I propose to write tomorrow. I intend to set out for London 5 o'clock on Saturday morning and to be here on Monday evening if a coach leave London on Monday morning. Mr Durell appears to be a shrewd, clever, straight forward man. I am glad I have seen him.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 38

London Coffee House 3rd August 1816

My Lord

I did not get to London yesterday as I proposed because all the tenants did not appear on Thursday as I expected they would have done and also because it proved that no coach left Faringdon or London till this morning. I did not write to your Lordship yesterday as I proposed, because Mr Dixon of London and his family broke in upon me unexpectedly on their return from Yorkshire to London. The Post allows me a little more time to say that in a few days I pay to Mr Tarrant the late Canfield's Executor about £400 for the land bought of him, and that I have deposited with your Bankers here £1,900 for which I hold their receipt but on my desiring them to write to your Lordship by this Post, they said it was late and their hours of correspondence but that they would write your Lordship on Monday. I intend to return home by the Oxford Coach on Monday morning and on Tuesday I hope to write to your Lordship at length. I have perused Atkinson's plans. They have much merit and have yielded me much gratification.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 39

Beckett 7th August 1816

My Lord

I wrote to your Lordship on the 1st inst. with a draft amount of £1,000 and a note amount £200 on the 3rd inst. I advised your Lordship of £1,900 being paid into Moreland Bank and of the engagement I am under to pay Mr Tarrant (Canfield's Executor) £400 in the course of a few days. The lateness of the Spring then the peeling of Oak timber so far back as midsummer, which occasions many trees to be immoveable until the grass and corn harvests be over. The stoppage of the County Banks around us and the scanty issue of notes from them, which remains almost faster this part of the county in their pecuniary transactions. All these difficulties however are transient and will soon blow over. Divers of your Lordship's tenants hold notes of Wantage Bank and on the 1st instant, (your Lordship's Rent Day), a Pleasure Boat or Packett set out from Longcott Wharf freighted with farmers to vote for Mr Crowdy's brother as an Assignee! Six assignees have been appointed through the influence of rival attorneys, whose respective interest are all thus taken care of.

I should have written your Lordship yesterday but from the fickleness of the weather, I became too much concerned in the hay harvest to catch time for the Post.

Mr Durell delivered to me fifty drawings for the new mansion house which sufficiently display Mr Atkinson's abilities as a scientific architect and in justice to Mr Atkinson I wish your Lordship to give me instructions to send them to your Lordship. The inspection of these plans will further suggest to your Lordship the probable expense consequent on this erection. Mr Atkinson makes his estimate £21,000. Mr Durell concurs with me in believing Mr Atkinson might have doubled the estimate with much propriety even supposing strict economy to be experienced. But on my observing to him this was a great sum for your Lordship (with twelve children) to layout and that it would encumber your son with an establishment disproportionate to the estate, he remarked with great quickness the house would neither be too expensive nor too large. That other property

would attach to this estate. That as estates go in Berkshire, this must be considered one of the most considerable and that it might fairly look forward to represent the county, in which case the house would only be proper. As those sentiments flowed from him quick and spontaneous, and as the habitual arrangement of his thoughts, I directly seized the opening to name the most desirable accession which at no great distance might probably be made to the Beckett estate by the purchase of the Blagrove property which at present was so mixed up and blended with your Lordship's land. Mr Durell made one marked and inquisitive attention to this piece of information and he asked me not less than thrice the rent of Mr Blagrove's land near Beckett. I told him I believed it to be about £1200 a year. I told him this thrice, and he mused upon it sufficiently.

To revert again to the house. From reasons which Mr Durell will have stated to you, it appears desirable the house should be covered in by the next autumn, and the interior can be proceeded with or deliberately as your Lordship shall choose. If the Bishop will advance the whole £10,000 off hand, this flow may indeed be desirable to your Lordship and the advantages may chance to accrue to your Lordship by so doing. This expensive structure being urged on you by the Bishop which remains a monument honourable to his own name, he will be greatly gratified by its exterior appearance. When the interior finish does not make progress beyond a certain sum per annum, the impatience to see it perfected will advance further supplies. For who ever planted and then neglected to water? In this instance the impulse is two fold, the perfection of the mansion and the rendering manifest the correctness of his choice in the subject of his protégée. I hastily submit these thoughts to your Lordship's consideration. As it is the pleasure, so it becomes the duty of the Bishop of Durham, who has no children of his own to be most aiding and assisting to build this monument to the honour of his family name. My own dear head father who is as old, as just, and in many respects liberal, never did me his eldest son right, but ... *missing* ... instances when he saw himself perpetrated in the mode ... *missing* ... agreeable to his own fancy.

I expressed to Mr Durell a hope we should have the advantage of his opinion and judgement as we proceeded in this mansion, with which he appeared pleased.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 40

Beckett 9th August 1816

My Lord

I wrote your Lordship the 17th inst. and yesterday I have you Lordship's letter of the 5th. The £1,900 will be made good which now stands back, but from the excessive pressure which now prevails in this district from the failure of some banks and the system of other banks to withdraw their notes from circulation and issue no fresh ones. Purchases and payments generally speaking, are paid fast. The state of things has obliged Mr Tarrant to call on me for the payments of Canfield's land. Thomas Wilson, whom half years rent is about £160 has been confined to his bed the last six weeks by a severe rheumatic fever, and he cannot get his concerns squared till he gets out of the house again. Butler owes £160 but he must leave his farm with as little loss to himself as possible under some management. I think the farm will be let for £60 to £80 a year more rent than he gives for it. I have paid Mr Killard for the stock etc of the farm taken with land £115 and the rent devolved on your Lordship last Michaelmas which makes between £50 and £60 the half year. The Cord wood, Faggot wood sold and not paid for, and the Cord wood and Faggots yet to sell absorb nearly £500, but people have no money at all either to pay for what they have bought or for what they wish to buy. I suffer not fewer than 500 trees lay scattered among the grass and the corn which cannot now be come at, and if come at, it would hardly be wise to attempt a considerable sale of them until the spirits of the country revive a little. From about £100 to £150 will have to be applied to the purchasing of horses and implements for the management of Killard's land lately taken into hand, and which must now very soon be done. The horses will be employed in drawing materials to the new house. The Lime trade does at present occupy a little capital, but in the course of two months will occupy little if anything more than the amount of its own profits. I have been fearful to push this trade from the state of the times but we have none on hand and we are sure to prevail in the county in this article. From the long continued poster, which with us held *** may, I durst not commence making bricks until late in the season being determined not to make a false step and the continued ruins of this summer equally determined me not to aim so much as quantity as safety, therefore few or no

bricks will be burnt, but what will be wanted for the cellaring and the quoins and the chimney of the new house. But in the bricks so wanted, they will be of good quality. Should the autumn prove fine a good deal of ground may still be gained in this business, which has hitherto been lost by unseasonable weather.

I promise you my Lord, all shall be done that can be done under the untoward circumstances of the present times, but I have never yet seen anything similar to them. Persons fail who were never before suspected of pecuniary weakness and the traders of over market towns here possess themselves to be without trade.

I now pass my Lord, to the subject of the intended Mansion House. A dozen different ways may be adopted in proceeding with this house, as circumstances might require. From the conversation I had with Mr Durell, it strikes me the Bishop of Durham takes a deep interest in this building, as it respects its commencement, its plan, and the incidents of architecture, A Clerk of the Works, etc. When I found how strongly these sentiments were ingrossed both in the Bishop and in Mr Durell too, I thought it very well to say, that Mr Atkinson, the Clerk of the Works, and myself, were to move in very different departments, that if properly understood, they did not interfere with each other, but mutually bore in and of each other. Mr Atkinson furnished the plans, the Clerk of the Works, whoever he was, preceded over the execution of them, and it became my province to purchase, to pay, to find work people, and to attend to the economy in the disbursements of everything consequent on such a building. This seemed quite to satisfy Mr Durell and he instantly asserted to the propriety of it. Whatever made of proceeding secures to you Lordship the greatest possible amount of money that can be immediately advanced and by its judicious application the best prospect of farther early and, is perhaps the line most eligible to be pursued. I found this opinion is the life of a person already turned of eighty years. Mr Durell and I will agree, because in our progress and shall prove congenial. Mr Berens and I will agree because I will sway him. Mr Atkinson and I will not disagree, because I comprehend his merit and I will not withhold it from him. The Clerk of the Works will soon find he has nothing to do but mind his own department, and that if he attempts more it will be unavailing, and that he may chance be crushed to death.

Whatever line of proceeding may be pursued an immediate preparation should be entered upon, and when your Lordship shall have determined what plan is to be pursued, the operations of making contracts, of digging foundations, of buying timber, of treating with master-workmen, of ... *missing* ... broken stone etc, should be directly entered on.

If Mr Durell be brought well with me in the first instance, I ... *missing* ... afterwards command his good disposition towards me, and should it please God to spare the Bishop's life a very few years, I durst pledge myself he will never allow your Lordship to be at one shilling's expense on the house as indeed your Lordship with twelve children should not be.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 41

Beckett 14th September 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 17th inst. and am attentive to its contents. I proposed to write to your Lordship at great length, but being much indisposed today by having caught a cold from wet feet, I beg to postpone the doing so a few days until my health is a little more stabilised. I thank God I appear to be getting better and I hope to be downstairs tomorrow. I have not a word from Mr Durell nor anyone concerning the new Mansion House. I now have the pleasure to say that I have let the new arranged farm formed out of Ackerman's and Giles' to Giles himself at £700 a year which is an advance of between £120 and £130 a year. The fractional part that will be cut off and which lie scattered around the village will bring a similar advance. I before advised your Lordship of having let Bennett's farm at an advance of about £100 a year the day before yesterday. I let Butler's farm, including the two fields lately taken from and added to Fairthorne's at

an advance on Mr Barnes' valuation of £50 a year. I think I shall not meet with any difficulty in getting an advance of £20 a year on Mr Killard and I propose to give him the preference if he choose to over *** it. When I get a little more strength I will make out for your Lordship the particulars of the grounds or farms nearly let, and also the particulars of the small farm now in hand. These relets that I have named will [together] constitute an advance of better than £500 a year. These improvements have been made without any degree of unpopularity in the neighbourhood and with little or no uneasiness to the tenants in general. Bennett however, is a good deal soured. By way of showing his resentment he lets all the thistles grow in Home Leaze without being mown and he has refused to let the incoming tenant mow them at his own expense, so that there will be an abundant crop of this seed. At the same time most of his swine are suffered to *** in the Home Leaze without rings to their noses by men plowing the field for the reception of the previous seed with which he designs to sow it. It is a thing not deserving to be named otherwise than as it is confirmatory of the distortion before manifested, that he goes to Coxwell for the bricks awaited in the filling up of the house he has bought at Shrivenham, passing by the Beckett Brick Kiln which is at his own door. Seeing Mr Bennett has a mind thus constituted, I am not sorry at the public manifestation of it. I myself never had but one opinion of this wealthy man's disappointment. It was the general opinion here that to attempt to raise Mr Bennett's farm would cause an influence against me sufficient for my overthrow, and I had cautions anew given me on these head; but I never regarded them a straw. If I had his present treatment of this estate shown what a wasteful compliment would have been paid to this worthy gentleman's great consideration and importance. Mr Berens now has his eyes opened and sees things in a very different point of view than I believe he had been accustomed to do, and perceives him worse than useless. It would be to throw away a vast many hundreds a year upon such a character as this. A better *** of tenants and an improvement of the rents may in certain instance go very well hand in hand. I have not said anything myself to Mr Bennett concerning his thistles and pigs, but I got the incoming tenant to apply to him. I will appear on his flank in due time for after such a genteel behaviour he cannot be surprised at being asked for his Michaelmas rent when it becomes due. These people do not see a long way before them.

In what relates to the new Mansion House, perhaps all things considered, no arrangement could have exceeded that which is adopted with this proviso, that the contracts for the workmanship should rest with your Lordship's Steward, as well as the buying of the materials, otherwise the greatest loop hole of all will be left open. Mr Atkinson and his Clerk of the Works must always object to work that is not properly executed and put a stop to it, or thrown out of it be really defective, but they ought by no means to have the app *** of the people.

The little dog belonging your son comes on very well.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 42

Beckett 26th September 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the *** inst. and I will procure the four samples of Wheat if possible. Not having heard anything from Mr Durell I have written to him for information and if the new Mansion House be proceeded in, the requisite stock of materials on hand for if the purpose of seasoning and the purpose of selection (with the workmanship conferred on a portion of these materials) ought not to fall short of £3,000. If there be a less stock than this, I mean inclusive of a certain portion of workmanship, the materials will not work up to the best advantage. Your Lordship will readily conjectured this to be the case when I instance Bath Stone alone. These blocks of stone cannot be got, to cut to casing of one uniform thickness. Mr Atkinson in his instructions says the thickness casing must be toward the bottom of the building, and the thinner towards the top. But without a considerable stock this very proper selection cannot be made. Again different blocks of stone will vary in shade of colour, but those stone of nearly the same

shade must be classed together. Again some blocks of stone will not stand the frost, and in such instance the quarry proprietor with whom we deal stands liable to their return. But such stones can be proved only by the opportunity of exposing them to the frost. Freight is lower in the winter than summer, at all events the less we are pressed for time the better we can form our agreements. Masons are cheaper in winter than summer. These people in winter can prepare the Bath Stone in the out offices. The timber ought to have been laid in twelve months since. Unless we get to work with our preparations immediately no progress will be made next summer. Contracts must be made, workmen collated, foundations dug, all of which consume time, more than is usually imagined.

The farm on hand consists of fields No 3 - 92 - 93 - 94 - 95 - 96 - late Killard together 32a 3p 1r arable. 13a 1r 20p meadow. Of 205 and 206 late Perring - together 6a 0r 31p less 1a taken off for Brick Yard. Of No 9 arable late Willoughby 4a 0r 33p. Total 55a 2r 5p = 36a 3r 34p of which is arable and 18a 2r 11p is grass land. The arable in the land late Killard consists of 12 acres of Wheat, 9a 1r 32p Beans and Peas. 4½ acres of Oats, 5 ¼ acres of Clover. The four acre field of arable late Willoughby consists of Beans, Wheat and Potatoes. The state of the arable crops I can best describe when they are reaped, but it may now be observed generally that no husbandry whatever is displayed in this arable ground. There us much weed and little corn.

The farm I have let to Mr Giles comprises the whole of Ackermans present farm, with the exception of field 72 7a 3r arable and the following numbers of his own farm 63 - 64 - 65 - 81 - 88 - 89 - 90. The new farm contains 249a 0r 19p of which 153a 3r 21p is arable and 95a 0r 58p grass. The present rent of this ground is £578.18.4. The rent at which I have let it to Mr Giles is £700. I can get my prices for the residence of these two farms, for if I cannot reach the prices in some instances, I can exceed it in others. I have renewed Mr Killard's notice to quit for the purpose of treating with him for an increase of rent, but from the great drop in Cheese sustained at Reading Fair last week, I am in some doubt whether this farm had not better be rented for by and by than just now when everything is so flat and dead. Someone has just put it into Mr Bennett's head within this day or two that it may be respectable in him to mow his thistles. He has done so, but too late to prevent injury arising from his original intention. I am glad your Lordship is so well with your harvest in the north. We are uncommonly backward in the past. Generally speaking

nothing is so properly managed here as the sweet indolence of a dairy farm where the cows and the good woman engross the merit. There is one thing strikes me forcibly and for which I cannot account. The audacity of the manufacturers to seize an improvement which will bring his operations nearer to a pitch of perfection, and the obstinacy with which the farmer here opposes any innovation whatever of long established usage. Human nature must be the same in Lancashire and in Berkshire. All men respect their interests but have the opposite extremes in the husband man and the manufacturer are to promote these goods is difficult to solve.

Our Oats, Peas, Hay and Clover are pretty well got in with the exception of two acres of Hay, which was inevitably spoiled but the increase of grass, the consequence of so much rain, must be considered a remuneration for this loss.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather.

Letter No 43

Beckett 3rd October 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 29th September by todays Post and I hope your Lordship will have received a letter which I wrote your Lordship last Saturday.

Yesterday four Pheasants were forwarded to your Lordship at Durham by way of London. If I know what days of the week would be the most acceptable for your Lordship to receive the game, I would endeavour to continue that it should be at Durham on that day. When your Lordship shall have occasion to write, I should be glad to be informed at what time the mail coach reaches Durham from any given time it leaves London, also from what time it sets out in London. I will then direct the game from hence to the care of the Inn Keeper in London and my son will call on him to enjoin punctually in forwarding it to Durham Sedgfield.

While I'm on the subject of game, I beg to represent to your Lordship that the man who has hitherto been the assistant game keeper, must by all measure be changed. I had prepared to have done this last year, but Hedges so interceded for him with all his might and soul that I unwittingly gave way to his violent importunity. I am much better informed on this subject now and I am convinced from an hundred circumstances your Lordship has something far more likely than a sleeping partner in this man's services. Besides I am assured he receives presents of cheeses from the neighbouring farmers. This man too, has a general acquaintance with all the house estates whose carts weekly frequent Wantage, Oxford etc. My own observations lead me to believe that game keepers on no-resident estates persuade themselves that the game is their own private property. I saw enough of that last year, but I do not think there will be any more of it and a change of the assistant keeper will cast off the facility of getting the game off the estate.

Mr Bennett as your Lordship reasonably supposes, had the first offer of his farm and he had it so in offer many months in preference to everyone. Your Lordship is sorry he has shown his clover foot foes exist. I wish it to show itself. "Visible things deceive not." Hedges is not at home but when he comes in, I will give him your Lordship's instructions concerning Sir Henry Marten shooting. I will attend to the packages when they arrive and it will be some saving in expense and an increase of attention if they be addressed to the care of Mr John Prince, Wharfings, Abingdon. There is a good stable at your Lordship's house late Canfield, so that no horses, nor indeed servants, need go to Mrs Lucas'. We have had much rain this week, but it has become fine this morning. Today we have begun cutting Wheat. My sister wrote me some time back that I must daily expect to hear of my Father's dissolution, and Mr Hollingworth's intelligence seems to be a confirmation of this. The beginning of last January I got extremely wet in going from hence to Faringdon in the evening to take the Shand Coach going up to London. The coach arrived at Faringdon just as I got there. I got in and travelled all night in my wet clothes. In consequence I have now to do what I never did before. I am taking care of myself and living by rule.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 44

Beckett 17th October 1816

My Lord

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's letter of the 7th inst. and I have deferred answering it day by day in expectation of inclosing your Lordship a few hundred pounds. My expectations I hope cannot be much longer disappointed.

The disbursements made on account of the new Mansion House and which will be made before Spring, are such as arise from the following items; viz. a Lime Kiln and Kiln House adjoining, Brick Kiln and stock of bricks to be kept on hand, Hardware (chiefly nails), Bars, Planks etc, foundations digging, stone quarrying during winter, taking down the more ancient part of the present house. Part of this expense is incurred and the remainder is and will lie in progress. I suppose £600 will cover these disbursements. The present Lime Kiln and Brick Kiln are situated in places the best adapted to serve the new structure. For purpose of sale, the future kilns must be placed on the banks of the Canal.

I hope to see Mr Durell soon after his return from the North. The waste of time in beginning the new house exceeds all expectation. The 2nd, the 8th and the 15th inst, four Pheasants were forwarded at each time. The last directed to the care of Mr Willan of the Bull and Mouth Inn, London. The day of which I last wrote your Lordship, I told Hedges that the younger Thomas Ackriel (a name long recorded in the weekly wage account of Beckett) would in future be the assistant keeper. It is not necessary to tell your Lordship what passed on this occasion. It was however, very short and full. Hedges said he would have no body but the old assistant keeper. I said this could not possibly be, and that Ackriel would enter on his office the following morning. I dare say all is right as I have heard nothing to the contrary. Ackriel is an honest faithful servant. He understands his duty as assistant keeper and will do it. He has often practised this way at Beckett and his father was assistant keeper many years. They are both of them open generous men and not likely to be tempted by any offers made them. It has been little but rain and heavy

fogs since I wrote your Lordship, but the weather has been better these last three days. I have not yet got the sample of Taunton Wheat but I shall get it. Thomas Edgington applied to me a day or two since for what he calls a balance against your Lordship. He stands indebted to your Lordship by Mr Davis' accounts of £209 odd. His claim cannot for a moment deserve your Lordship's notice. He says the Trustees of this estate promised to pay his claims upon them. This is right, but then they could mean only any just claim he could have on the estate. After applying to me at different times and writing to me on the subject he lately wrote to Mr Berens concerning this balance which he says is due to him and Mr Berens applied to me when he was fully satisfied that Edgington is a considerable debtor to your Lordship. It is a debt however that is as well written off for nothing will ever be attained.

I am glad to learn your son approves the accounts. Tomorrow I forward them embodied and entered in one book of which I keep a duplicate at Beckett. I have omitted the non essential accounts and have added some other which place on record those points of information that it is desirable your Lordship should have collected and at hand, whenever your Lordship might choose to refer to them. The application which it has required to bring these accounts out in this form, is not conceived by a bare perusal of them.

I thank your Lordship for the notice you take of my health. Dr Nell of Oxford strongly recommends me to go to Cheltenham a fortnight. If it please God to restore me I shall be the better man for this visitation as long as I believe he will restore me. Your Lordship's advice is excellent and I have been acting on it for some time past.

Mr Dixon and his family are my inmates at present. They have been here a few days and will enter their new residence at Watchfield next week. Mr Dixon has made it a pretty place at the expense of some what upwards of a thousand pounds as I imagine. He seems well pleased with the improvements at the house, but the grounds cannot be finished till next Spring.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 45

Beckett 1st November 1816

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 21st October and on Wednesday I had a letter from Mr Durell. The taking down the more ancient part of the present mansion at Beckett, the digging the foundation of the new house and the preparing enough stone for the walls appear to be what is intended for the operations before Spring. I propose to go to Cheltenham the beginning or the middle of the ensuing week, when I do not intend to continue long, and on my return I hope to have an interview with Mr Durell.

This part of Berkshire is in a bad state from the many failures that are taking place. Mr Anse of Wantage has stopped payment for £70,000 as I am informed. I have had my apprehensions of him for some time past, from the nature of his payments, which are not very commercial but which I find the neighbourhood were used to and so did not apprehend anything. The promissory note he gave me payable in London for £200 is the extent of our involvement, and which I took to fix the payment to some determinate time rather than leave a vague account. I have detained all the timber till Koniff's bill be actually paid. Ansell has always long had the bank of this estate and of the gentlemen's estates in this part of Berkshire, as well as the greater part of the bank sold by the government agents. This year he bought Mr Mills of Wadley, Mr Knights of Compton, Sir John Throgmorton and others, even Jas Fidel, who has the best information in these matters of any one in this part. I am assured all their persons remains unpaid. Mr Fidel tells me he wants £120. I have done whatever lay in my power to extricate this £200 and I had Ansell's assurance it should be done. I have been in expectation of this till within a few days past. Inclosed is a bill £210.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 46

Cheltenham 18th November 1816

My Lord

I have received your Lordship's letter of the 5th and the 9th inst. addressed to me at this place and I am highly sensible of your Lordship's goodness to me both as relates to the manner in which you have treated Mr Ansell's failure, and as it concerns the accounts which I sent to your Lordship. I am further obliged to your Lordship's kind wishes for my health.

In respect to Mr Ansell I should, in his neighbourhood have been thought the most incredulous man alive, if I had doubted him, but had his modes of business been as familiar to me as they appear to have been to most persons, I should have declined intercourse with him. His credit and good name have far exceeded his desert. I think I named to your Lordship that the timber remains on the estate until we see the fate of the timber bill. It is almost impossible to say now who is safe or with whom to deal. Each succeeding Gazette presents one with the name of some unfortunate acquaintance. I am glad the Bishop approves of the plan adopted for the accounts. I am secure in whatever concerns your Lordship, the pleasure of pleasing is to me very great, yet cases will arise where one cannot have ones own desire, but must be satisfied to make the best of the worst. The Bishop will see Shrivenham to the greatest advantage when the house occupied by Giles comes to be brushed up. The cleaning up of this house will do more towards beautifying the village than all the other improvements together.

I congratulate your Lordship in your successful seed time for your Wheat. We have had within one continued rain, so that the fruits of the earth are greatly injured. When I left home, I had by me the surplus of Wheat with the exception of the Taunton sample. I hope to find it also on my return.

Sir Arthur Faulkner, who is the Physician I have placed myself under here, says my complaint is that of a debilitated stomach and to a high degree, arising in a great measure from constitutional propensity to what is bilious and nervous. This disorder, he says, has been essentially increased by the load on my spirits during my long period of trouble. On my observing to him that thus period of trouble was now past, and that my present situation and employment led to great tranquillity, he said, nothing was more usual than for this disorder to manifest itself after the difficulty was passed which had called forth the full exertion of the spirits to contend with and that this succeeding period of tranquillity was the very time when I should be most likely to find what inroad my troubles had made on my spirits. He says I have no liver complaint whatever, and he assures as he declares in great sincerity, that my life is not in any danger from my complaint. He recommends great attention in regard to diet and regime, and he says until my digestion be a good deal improved, I must avoid all dampness and cold air, keeping myself very warm, and on the return of Spring I must make it a habit of my life to ride on horse back an hour and a half daily before dinner. Under this indisposition of health, I see my Lord a divine and I think a beneficial determination towards me. I enjoy the countenance and protection of your Lordship. I enjoy this countenance and protection in an employment which embraces the very genius and turn of my mind. An indulgent providence has placed within my reach congenial society in the person of a much valued friend. This my present indisposition of health, this moment more demands of me such nice habits of life as shall correspond with the correct principles of my education with the love of my friend who has placed himself beside me, and with the entire approbation of my own heart. I cannot then but hail an affliction which may grace my enjoyments in this world, and under the blessing of God, seemed to me the happiness of the world to come.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

NB. Mrs Hollingsworth and her daughters are here, but Mr H. has returned to Halton Histle. I propose to return to Beckett the beginning of the ensuing week.

Letter No 47

Beckett 24th December 1816

My Lord

I was duly honoured by my Lord's letters of the 7th and the 9th inst. and am governed by the instructions thereon. The article of furniture arrived from Mr Bywaters on Saturday the 14th and on Tuesday the 17th. I wait the Honourable Augustus Barrington under cover to the Bishop at Mongewell, informing him that the house would be fitted up by the evening of the following day, and that at anytime when he might please to favour me with a letter appraising us of his intention to be at Shrivenham, we could be prepared of ... *missing* ... reception in the course of a very few hours after the receipt of his letter. I have heard nothing since, so that it's probable the young gentleman may spend the first days of their Christmas at Mongewell. The articles of linen etc, sent by sea from Stockton are not come to hand, nor have I any advice of them from town, but with a little indulgence on the part of your Lordship's sons who may visit Shrivenham this Winter, there will be no occasion to purchase linen or any articles whatever in lieu of those which have not yet arrived. I will make a schedule of the things which come into the house at Shrivenham distinguishing such as were already there, such as come from Durham and Mr Byewater and such as are purchased here. I consider Mrs Hedges both a careful and a cleanly woman, and there will be no waste under her management, yet the articles of consumption I have chosen to buy in myself. This is no more than a wholesome check upon price, weight and measure, the onus of which even when not participated in are in great families far too much connived at by those whose duty it ought to be to fence against the profitability of such mistakes.

Mr Bennett's son called on me lately to know what must be done respecting his father's stock of Hay on his leaving his farm at Lady Day? I have written to the incoming tenant who says he will require very little or any of it, as his brother who lives at Compton Marsh will have some of his to spare and this year Mr Bennett's Hay was got very ill. It is not improbable but Mr Bennett will have more than a hundred tons to dispose of. Mr Jas Fidel who is the factum of this part of the county tells me Mr Bennett cannot without

your Lordship's consent sell this Hay off the estate, but he admits that Mr Ward of Faringdon the Principal Attorney in this part of Berkshire, has a different opinion in cases where no lease or written agreement exists. As this is a point without the range of my experience, I shall be glad to know your Lordship's pleasure in this case. If Mr Bennett cannot legally remove so great a weight of produce off his farm, his behaviour at parting merit no extension of courtesy, in this care, and such would be the generally received impression. If he be obliged to consume this Hay on the farm, he ought to be informed without loss of time, that he may provide the adequate stock for its consumption. In the latter case, if we may judge ... *missing* ... what has passed, he will assuredly feed his beasts with this Hay or those conditions of the land which will suffer the most from being trodden on. To effect this he will overlook the minor injury accruing to himself by so doing. I can assure your Lordship in great truth there is nothing whatever personal between Mr Bennett and myself, nor has there been. The apprehension I entertain of his mal treatment of the land arises purely from the recent ill treatment of it, in the case of thistles etc. If we determine that the Hay shall be consumed on the farm we cannot with any good grace recede from our declared intention, should he persist in selling the Hay off the ground, if by chance that should be his resolution. A contest with him will involve feelings beyond himself. He is Brother-in-Law to Mr Williams, to Mr Lucas, to Mrs Bennett of Shrivenham etc. His son is really a respectable young man and much esteemed. His wealth and age give him a respect which veils his stupidity in some degree. These accidents claim perhaps little consideration but whether they should balance against the injury to the estate of so great a loss of manner which cannot be replaced is also a matter of consideration, and it must be kept in view that, no thanks or good will, will remain in counter balance for the real loss. It must further be kept in mind that whatever be allowed to Bennett in the matter of his Hay, will be expected by Ackerman and Butler who both leave at Lady Day. I have been thus particular concerning Bennett's Hay that should his perverseness and obstinacy originate a law suit, your Lordship may be on solid ground in our proceedings.

I now have to inform your Lordship that the land of Wirdnam's which I before named to your Lordship is to be sold. It is that portion of ground concerning which Mr Berens said if he was ever tempted to break the commandment, "thou shalt not covet" it was in the instance of this piece of land, for the sake of the Beckett Estate. This purchase is equally

desirable to the Beckett Estate, and to Mr Fairthorne, whose land like your Lordship is contiguous to, and blended up with it. Fairthorne is extremely desirous to buy this land. He is wealthy, his money is at liberty and he is as obstinate as a pig in what he determines. Nevertheless we have a decided preference in the Attorney who has the sole of it, and who can give direction to it. With such a competitor as Fairthorne who is also the present tenant, it cannot be expected this ground can be purchased to pay great interest. I think it can be purchased to pay £3 per cent at its present rent, and £3 (one third) at an improved rent, but in either case, Fairthorne must expect to be the continued tenant as it will be bought still higher. If Fairthorne had an assurance of this ground for his life at its present rent, provided he cultivated it well it is possible it may be bought to pay £3½ percent at its present rent which would be more to your Lordship's advantage. The rent of this land is £100 a year and there is a good dwelling house also which lets for £24 a year. Whether the house will be sold with it is yet undetermined, but if it should be sold also, I expect to buy it to pay at least £5 percent on its present rent. It is a good house and situated just behind your Lordship's house late Canfield's. The land is considered as not exceeded in quality by any in Shrivenham, and it joins the town. It consists of about 35 acres. I have had something to do to prevent its being sold in small parcels as the necessities of the owner can now no longer defer the sale. Mr Ward a Solicitor of Faringdon, waits an answer as to our intention and *** to his influence and that of James Fidel with the owner of the land and with Fairthorne the tenant that I can hope possess your Lordship of the desirable addition to the Beckett Estate on the terms I have named. I have promised Mr Ward an early answer.

Mr Berens called yesterday with the inclosed for your Lordship's signature which Mr Crowdy thought would be best done to your Lordship's own seal. But for Mr Berens unwearied application, I think this road must have failed, for to this last alteration Mr Knight of Compton put in his objections; but on correspondence with Mr Berens has withdrawn them.

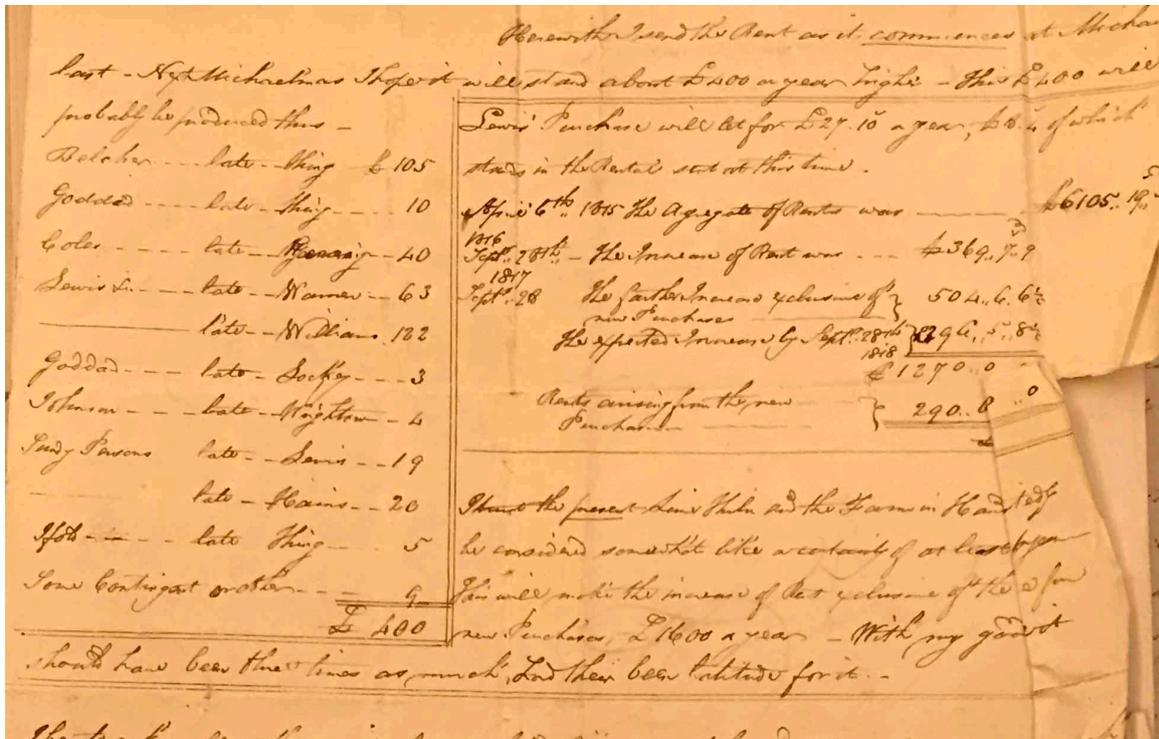
I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 48

Beckett 9th January 1818

My Lord

Herewith I send the Rent as it commences at Michaelmas last. Next Michaelmas I hope it will stand about £400 a year higher. This £400 will probably produce thus;



I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's letter of the 23rd December and I am very much pleased that the term and farm accounts meet with your Lordship's approbation. I wish your Lordship also to accept of my thanks for the handsome present your Lordship ... missing ... on the farm account, but I beg your Lordship to believe I feel a very disinterested ... missing ... in the improvement of your Lordship's interests. There are two persons at this time ... missing ... William's farm accompanied by my son; a young man was over it this morning, whose father is to be here next Monday or Tuesday.

Mrs Amos is Mr Williams Aunt and a cousin who married one of Mrs Lucas' daughters has been solicitous to take Williams' farm but he does not come up to my price. I have guarded against the danger there was in having the people who have come after the farms, at Mrs Lucas' by making them inmates at my home the while, for old Bennett is constantly at Mrs Lucas' and he done much towards persuading Giles to conduct himself as he has done. I had set part yesterday evening to write your Lordship very fully when I became occupied by a young man who came six miles beyond Oxford to take a farm and who held me engaged till 10 o'clock this morning. He was with us all night. His father it is who is to be here on Monday or Tuesday. This lad just left the house when two persons came from near Devizes so that this day has been consumed in like manner. But I propose to write your Lordship in a few Posts in detail concerning Giles' matter on which I am quite at ease in my own mind. The Post man waits. Beans will be about 3/6 to 4/- a sack of 4 bushels to go from here by water to London and I suppose about 3/- a sack from thence to Stockton. I can have goods *** ** and less for 13/- each, 8 feet long with 5 rails, and 3 uprights the handle weighing 17 cwt.

The young gentlemen are both well

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 49

Beckett 21st January 1818

My Lord

I have received your Lordship's letter of the 12th inst. and also Mr Davison's of the 14th. The rest of the new purchases with the exception of a part of Lewis's property is included in the Rent Roll.

The new purchasers stand as follows:-

Of Whom Purchased	Purchase money	Tenants Names	Rent	Total Rent
Canfield's House	750	Lord Barrington Hedges for Gardens Wrighton, John	40.0.0 3.0.0 4.0.0	47.0.0
Canfield's Land	377	Moxham, William		18.17.0
Wirdnam's Purchase exclusive of Timber	3833	Badcock, Joseph Fairthorne, John	34.0.0 100.0.0	124.0.0
Ackerman's Colley's Land	1015	Lord B in hand Hughes, Thomas Hunt, John Wrighton, John	44.0.0 6.0.0 6.0.0 30.0.0	86.0.0
Davis other his house	80	Gosling, Robert Haywood, Thomas Hazel, John Kitchener Liddiard, Barbara Shrivenham Parish <u>Ditto</u>	4.19.0 3.3.0 5.5.0 3.0.0 4.0.0 4.10.0 <u>4.10.0</u>	<u>28.17.0</u>
To which add the expense of conveyance and the disbursements on the house and property	6055			£304.17.0

I have the pleasure to say that, I have finally settled with Giles. As this man's case became the rallying point for whatever existed of opposition in this place to the recent changes, and as he was backed and encouraged in his knavery by the whole weight of the departing interest, I determined to beat him. By this expression my Lord, I mean I determined to beat him out of the fruits of his treachery, not oppress him. I did by Mr Crowdy and afterwards myself in the presence of Mr Berens say to Giles, "we had no desire whatever to bind him to his own bargain, if he thought it not advantageous to him." But as he had lulled me asleep to his intentions till after Michaelmas (the time of giving him notice to quit) I expected he would now accept such notice, and leave his present farm at Lady Day. He would however neither take to the new farm on the conditions stipulated, nor would he accept a notice to quit his present farm, which he could hold till Lady Day 1819. He offered me four shillings an acre less than he had agreed to give. From this determination he would not swerve, nor would he be prevailed on to give up his present farm. I told him he might rely I would not let Ackerman's farm but suffer it to be unoccupied and try if I could not change him with the rent. I assured him I was unworthy of all merit if when Lady Day came, and also at Michaelmas, I did detain for the full rent of the new farm, for the old rent of that part of the land which by our agreement he was to have given up, and I would further serve him with an action for the loss we sustained by him withholding these lands and the dwelling house from our possession since last Michaelmas. This man being encouraged by old Bennett, by Richard Gerring and others to believe the other farms were yet unlet, and that my hands were full beyond measure, and that I should by and by be glad to accept his proposal, persisted in his resolution. Meanwhile I got the best advice retained the best counsel by a general retainer, and interested Crowdy junior excessively in the success of this case, by the interest I expressed myself to take in it. (Young Crowdy has pleased me extremely in this matter), and he is gratified by the commendations I have paid to his merit in this case. Last week however, Giles had perfect conviction that the other farms did not stick on hand, but were in reality let. Fearful of losing his farm, and alarmed with what might be the effects of his obstinacy and viewing the speedy approach of Lady Day, when so heavy a destain would take place, he handed down his colours and came to. He did not choose to accept a notice to quit his present farm, but to take to his new farm at 56/- per acre, well knowing it is worth it. Although Giles in this instance has proved himself an

most unworthy man, yet I would not withhold from him that which in justice was done to anyone coming on to Ackerman's Farm. Whoever came to view that farm with an intent to take it make strong representations as to the state in which Ackerman left it. The field No 67 was nothing but a clotted mess of couch grass and it also wants draining very much. This field is more than 13 acres. The field 71, although powerful soil is in a very bad state. All his grounds are covered with weeds and thistles, and he sold off all his Hay and 40 acres of Wheat and Straw. Instead of abating of my price in the rent, I adopted your Lordship's suggestion and offered the applicants £100 to put those things in order. This offer I made to everyone who applied. The field 67 will cost all the money to bring it into condition. When Giles came to himself, I told him there was no desire to oppress him and that the same allowance would be made to him which had been offered to others. There is something in the situation of a conquered adversary that quite disarms ones resentment. Moreover everyone that is in power is answerable to his own conscience for the proper exercise of it, and I approve that judgement which is graced with mercy. Your Lordship may blame me in your own mind for not having held Giles under notice to quit, but at the time our agreement took place, I was still new and unfamiliar at Shrivenham, and all persons were doubtful of my motives and principles of actions. I had many enemies in those who had formerly concerned themselves in the affairs of this estate, and was looked upon with an evil eye by some who wished to have it thought they heretofore had an influential direction in the management of things here. By many of these persons it would have been represented as a harsh and severe step to give a man notice to quit, whose family had been at the farm forty five years. And although this family have no merit whatever so far as relates to this estate, except that of letting all the buildings on their farms seen to wrack and ruin, yet the accustomed farms of proceeding on this *** if exercised at the time would certainly have given a bad impression and this Mrs Berens has acknowledged to me. I should have every where been painted as a very savage of a Steward by this woman at Shrivenham. My rival, who goes about eating and drinking at every good house in the county. These representations must have remained without the possibility of a refutation and have stuck by me to the end of my days. I am sure your Lordship can enter your mind into the delicacy and deficiency of my situation at that time in respect to Giles. His conduct at this occasion will in all future cases be my apology for observing the strict forms of business. In consequence of the delay which has arisen in this matter, Lady Effingham's bargain has gone off, but I will ensure your

Lordship a more profitable one. We fell to work with Giles house yesterday the first day after our agreement was perfectly adjusted.

Mr Berens offered £340 for the field No 290 - 5a. 3r. 2p late in the occupation of Daniel Heath, now in the occupation of Tobias Groves at £13.10s a year. This field is at Fernham. This is not enough. I believe he has money to rent for some one. Perhaps Lady Effingham. Stall Pits Farm is now the only thing remaining to be let. I have purposely reserved this farm to the last. This being esteemed the great beauty. I hope it will almost let itself, without any other recommendations, in this change and instalment of farms and lands. I have not been unmindful to add some contiguous and choice fields to the farm in hand, namely the No 41, late Giles called the "Ten Acres," 10a. 1r. 8p. at 42/- . It is now in Clover and will stand to the farm in hand from last Michaelmas at 80/- per acre. The field 71 called, "Stall Pit Piece," 19a. 2r. 4p. arable, late Ackerman's at 44/- per acre will stand to the farm in hand since Michaelmas at 5 percent. There is a field not of this fine description of soil which from the bad state it is in would have injured the letting of Warner's or Gerring's farms. It is No 33 called, "The Lower Clay Land," 14a. 2r. 25p. arable, clotted couch grass, now Gerring at 36/- percent. At Lady Day I will take it into hand at 54/- per acre. Under generous culture it will be a famous field for Wheat and Beans. Farmers are soon frightened at a first expense, or else this field (nor the field No 71 late Ackerman's and included in Giles' new take) could not have fallen to our lot. Neither Rich nor Mapham fallow, or intend to fallow their fields but seem disposed to cultivate on alternate crops of Wheat and Potatoes ad infinitum. I will take both the fields into hand next Michaelmas, at the rents then people pay for them with a little increase on the field held by Rich. I must not at any rent let arable land to small people. I am taught this by experience. When the fields which I have named come to be collected into hand, they will in conjunction with the present farm (including Lockey's land for the present farm an aggregate of 144a. 0r. 38p. of which 108a. 3r. 15p. is arable and 35a. 0r. 13p. grass land at Fernham. The annual rent of the 144a will be £442, as I have stated it. At some early period I will present your Lordship with a prospectus of the present state of this land, with the supposed number of ploughing each field may be seen to require. Except one team of horses I mean to use oxen as your Lordship instructs. The 200 bushels of Beans shall be formed by 20 sacks of 80 bushels at a time as we get them thrashed. Mr Davison waits for 20 sacks only. Mr Davison says I must buy the iron handles. I mentioned to

your Lordship it would be a great acquisition if we could have two stout Yorkshire Swing Ploughs sent by sea without loss of any time directed to come to Beckett by "Harts Waggons from the New Inn, Old Bailey, London." Our Swing Ploughs are cast iron and of too feeble a construction for the first and second ploughings. They are constantly breaking which is both expense of time and money. Warren has two years stock of manure on hand, "because had he spread it, it would have made the land too rich!" The freight of Beans from London to Stockton is 11/- per sack of 4 bushels, and the wharfage and porteridge on board a ship is *** per sack.

I am my lord etc.... George Merryweather

Letter No 50

London 9th February 1818

My Lord

I have paid £1,600 into Morelands, £400 into Drummonds and I hope in the course of the present month to remit £500 more, and another £500 in the beginning of April. I received your Lordship's letter of the 2nd inst. and I attend to all the particulars. The Beans are ready to send off but the Thames being full of flood water will detain them two other days. I have bought two Swing Ploughs in London. The farming operations at Beckett are for the present confined to hedging, ditching and draining a part of the field No 71 - 20% acres. It will not require much draining. We are hedging, ditching and trenching the wood lands at Beckett, which required these operations very much. The two new horse roads are forming and stones are quarrying for them, and Lady Effingham's house now goes forward. Of the farm now in hand only succeed as I hope it may, and we have certain proof of this by the effect. I shall be very glad to adopt the idea of connecting Perrings farm with it, which would place the farming premises in the middle of the farm. But as this is a new sphere for me to move in, I wish to proceed cautiously, and not advance further than I can make my footing good and profitable. The house in

Shrivenham is furnished with window struts both above and below stairs and the furniture will be placed as Lady Barrington directs.

I intend to return to Beckett tomorrow and I will soon ascertain whether the bed box will stand in the room pointed out.

I am my Lord etc... George Merryweather

Mr Barrington is expected in town some time today so that I shall not have an opportunity to see him without breaking in upon his imminent arrival.

Letter No 51

Beckett 17th January 1818

My Lord

I paid Moreland & Co £1,600 and I have their receipt for it, but the apparent difference will admit reconciliation. Forte paid his rent by a cheque at 7 days sight on his banker in London, and I got a Banker's Bill at a months date for the odds and ends and untoward papers which I received on the rent day. This bill was drawn on Spooner's Bank in London and accepted by them. I believe it is the custom with what one called "deposit banks" like Morlands to take only so much to account as is actually cash, letting the residue over till it became due. The Beans were sent off last week, and I have given most particular instructions both at Abingdon and at the Hambrough Wharf in London, to see that not one day is lost in getting them forwarded to Stockton. There are 21 sacks each containing 4 bushels. I hope they will arrive in time. I have got Sir John Sinclair's "Code of Agriculture" and I observe he speaks greatly in favour of cutting off the tops of Beans etc. Your Lordship no doubt is acquainted with this publication. I dare say the idea of cutting their heads off to the right and left with a broad sword has originated with some highlander who is returned from the wars, and a capital idea it is. I notice Your

Lordship's observations in respect to cropping the Wheat and Potatoes in succession. Would the parties who do so keep their land in heart with manure, it would be immaterial what they cropped with, but this is not the case, nor do either of these people propose ever to fallow clean their land.

I have not said a word respecting Mr Beren's claim to thistle. I expect a crowd of people this week and next to view Stall Pits Pit Farm, after which I must set about letting it. I had eight last week making enquiries concerning it. I shall be glad to hear from Mr Davison whenever he can write to me. In treating for your Lordship's farms I have had satisfactory proof that every shilling paid for Poor Rates is just so much diminution of rent. The off going tenants would have smothered us with Poor this winter, to prevent the well letting of the farm, but anticipating the benevolence of this intention. I have frustrated it in every way, and the Poor have never been better employed. I gave the Parish an unrestricted permission to employ their vacant hands at the two stone quarries which furnish materials for the new roads. The price we pay the Parish in the instance of the hard stone is 7 pence per cubic yard, they to open the quarry and restore the earth again to its place. The price per yard for the other quarry is 4 pence per yard. This stone can be carted as it shall suit the convenience of the teams and their fill up all gaps and chasms of time. The Parish will not get rich at these prices, but they stand a long way in arrears to your Lordship. They are not tied to any quantity and have the option of doing as little or as much as they please. Leaving them thus at their liberty, stops the mouths of any who might choose to make observations on the price.

The drawing and opening the ditches of the 20 acre field No 71 answers to a miracle. Giles was very short sighted in relinquishing this field. The water now running from this field is like a small brook. I have the pleasure to know that our farmers acknowledge we far exceed them in management of arable land, and I hope it will be no long time ere things are all on their mettle, and that the rivalry will be, who has the most turnips to an acre, the most Wheat, the most Beans etc, and who can show the neatest and best conditioned farm in every respect. The labouring class too, perceive the advantage arising to themselves by the extra employment occasioned from the better cultivation of lands, and ask one and other where the labourers are to come from and what is to be the rate of wage if our new coming tenants cultivate as we do etc. I have always seen the

subject in this point of view and have often so represented to Mr Berens. I think I named to your Lordship that the bridle roads were throwing up and forming for the reception of stone whenever it may suit us to bed it. The Stainswick Copse is well enclosed, and we have inserted a wicket gate for the accommodation of hunters. The trenching there is not yet finished. Tomorrow morning we start with the trenching, ditching and hedging the two Brakes in Bowles' Farm. They are lost in water. Lady Effingham's house is in progress. We are just on the point of finishing the 7 cottages formed out of Lewis's premises. They were done by contract, as all winter works should be where it is of a nature to admit of it. I take the liberty to answer Lady Barrington concerning the house in Shrivenham on the other side of this sheet. (*this is missing*).

I am my Lord etc George Merryweather.

Letter No 52

Beckett 20th March 1818

My Lord

I can now announce to your Lordship the letting of Stall Pitts Farm. There have been upwards of ninety applications for this farm. I have got an excellent tenant. The rent is £750 a year and this is the utmost I have been able to accomplish. This is an advance of £76. I never took so much pains with any transaction I had in hand or I have done to let this farm to my wish. The shameful condition it is in has baffled my expectations. In two instances the men could not prevail with their wives to come and live at the house, and this also has been a great ban to its letting to my expectation. The disbursements the new tenants will have to make on the farm will be very considerable, for I have told them, without mincing the matter, the state of the cultivation I expect their farms to be in. I know how to make up the deficiency of my expectation or in regard to the rent of Stall Pitts, so that your Lordship shall still have the improved rent I spoke of - my £122. Not one person who has entered into treaty with me would take to this farm under terms of 7

years. I have been obliged to concede this point, or the farm would have remained on hand. Williams has not sown one seed of any description of Corn and I question of the best thing the tenant could do, would not be to fallow the whole of the arable land. The giving up these farms has been such a reflection on the judgement of the late tenants, that they have done by their reports whatever they could to impede the re-letting of them. The Stall Pitts Farm is let to a Mr Thomas Plummer of Purton near Wootton Bassett and in this instance I was obliged to take up on me a discretionary power of not letting it to him, or letting it decisively for his taking this farm dependant on a contingent in respect to his present farm, which it was not in his power to control. He was obliged to determine whether he would keep his present farm or leave it, and to enable him to do so, he must be on a certainty with Stall Pitts. Your Lordship may rely that nothing but the most determined firmness on the point of your Lordship's agent has saved these three farms from being literally sacked. It appears Frampton's family when they left sold the Hay, Straw, Manure and the very Hedgerows as they grew. Moreover they tore up all the trees in the gardens and took them away. These tenants persisted they had the same right and Warren came to me a few days since to prevail with me to let him cut down his hedgerows and sell them. Williams did make a beginning this way. Warner has carried off his garden trees. The action with Moses Ackerman for these very offences was carried on to the eve of the Reading Assizes when he came to and signed a cognovits relinquishing his pretentions and taking upon him to pay the expense of the suit. This surrender settled the business with the rest of them. The agreements with the tenants will in future protect the estate from this waste and dilapidation. When this storm is blown over, and the new tenants are settled in on their farms, I hope for a little clear water and quiet and I hope if it please God, there will be nothing but an honourable rivalry between the tenants and the Steward, which of us shall have our farms in the best order. The old tenants who remain must now set about to bring up their way of management. The field No 71 is now drained, hedged, ditched and grumbled, and the improvement is universally approved. I hope others will adopt the like method. The bushwood covered an acre of ground. The 84 bushels of Beans left Shrivenham on the 13th February. They left Abingdon for London the 23rd. I wrote to London desiring they might not experience one day's delay. I hope your Lordship has received them. My Lady Barrington's letter relative to the furniture etc, will be attended to at all points. I have written to the Wharfinger at Hay's Wharf to let the package be delivered to Hart's Warehouse the

instant of their arrival. I have written them not to delay there one day in London. £500 your Lordship may depend on the 2nd week in April, and the other £500 which I expected would be paid the latter end of last month, may yet be paid before the other £500 or a little later as it shall happen. I shall explain this in a letter very shortly. I write to your Lordship in a hurried manner today having been occupied with the Stall Pitts Farm. Mr Woodroffe, agent was here on Wednesday respecting Chapplewick Farm. Mr Woodroffe acts in a very disingenuous manner but I design him to pay for it if I can have it so. The outgoings on that farm are £141.14.9½ the year, the greater part of which he intended to suppress the knowledge of and his agent declared to me Mr Woodroffe had withheld him from the knowledge of them. The rates £15.17 so the balance of rent to the landlord would be £15.5.6½. He asked £2300 for the lease under an idea he could leave us ignorant of the charges which came against this farm. If your Lordship buy it, which I hope will be the case (at a proper price) by adding it to Ruffinwick, we can adopt a new rent for the whole of Ruffinwick Farm. I question whether this will not be the strongest reason for buying it.

We have been deluged with rain, but the weather is now fine. Our Poor Rates have this year increased under an abatement of the price of bread, and an *** call for labour. Last year they were £910. I should not wonder if they are £1,000 this year. A poor shoe maker make *** with hardly *** has the management of this concern at £15 a year, but without any time to attend to his. He does the best he knows how, but the same thing might assuredly be better done for £500 a year. Your Lordship's estate makes up ¾ of the residence and this mortifying circumstance is the only thing that makes me regard whether they are £1,200 or £12,000 a year.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 53

Beckett 22nd April 1818

My Lord

Inclosed are twenty six Bankers Notes amounting to five hundred pounds, which I will thank your Lordship to acknowledge the receipt of by return of Post. As I have no Bankers Account I cannot send this remittance in a better shape without an increase of expense for exceeding the Postage.

I received my Lady Barrington's letter last week, and tomorrow there will be forwarded a basket with a Jack, 4 Fowls, vegetables, (and Pidgeons (sic) if there be any). Whatever Pidgeons there may be for advance shall be sent to London. The same week your Lordship left Shrivenham the Dove Cote was minutely examined, and there was only one young one at that time. We did not use a dozen of them last year. We will cultivate them more in future. What ever spare time I have is occupied at my accounts. The operations going on since your Lordship was here, have been planting trees out of the nurseries into Wellington Wood, (which was terminated on Saturday evening last.) The finishing the hedging, ditching and trenchings of Bowles two Brakes, and the continuing of the Bridle Road from Longcott. In what respects buildings:- Lady Effingham's residence; the pointing of the walls of the 7 cottages late Lewis' premises, the thatching and pointing of Stall Pitts Farm House, and a little matter at Cowleaze Farm House comprises our operations. In the farm we are employed with Barley sowing. We have laid about 700 bushels of Coal Ashes on the Cherry Orchard which is taken in to hand, of 9 gallons to the bushel and upheaped, which I bought at 3½ pence per bushel delivered at Harman's Bridge. This field was mossy, and it is expected the ashes will destroy the moss. We have rolled the Wheat in the field late Sarah Ackerman, which has gathered up and looks remarkably well. The 10 acres field of Clover is also rolled and we are breaking the bones for the turnips at 10/- per ton. I have let to a good tenant at an advance of 3/- per acre the land in hand at Fernham late Lockey. The Tithe there is advanced to 9/- an acre, which hurts the letting of the land.

The seeds come well up at the Barnicles which field is now inclosed with iron hurdles and remarkable will it look. I hope to let this field along with the house adjoining it, which must soon be at liberty. On Mr Wilson's separation from his partners Haines and Gerring, who have since had a law suit with him, I have been as tender and lenient with him as possible to give him the chance of a fair settlement, at the same time not losing sight of the ultimate security. I gave him till this last Lady Day, and then finding him severed from his engagement to me, and disposed to do what was quite wrong and unfair, I served him with a distress for a part of the debt and a wait for the residue, and by so doing, I have got a bond and judgement. But Jas Fidel tells me Wilson is so exasperated, that he will do me a private injury if he can. This is a bad recompense for my kindness to him.

I will attend to all the points of my Lady Barrington's letter and instructions. As soon as I have a little more leave I will look throughout the whole library for the prints wanting of the Ruins of Polemy. I did not know there were such prints.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

NB. I have found situations for three of my children. A letter came the morning your Lordship left Shrivenham from Mr Clarke, Horatio's uncle, saying he had got such a situation for him, or I had long been in quest of the other two to go to London

Letter No 54

Beckett 19th June 1818

My Lord

The balance of my cash account your Lordship will perceive to be £516 in your Lordship's favour. Against this balance I am in disburse as follows, viz:-

Bricks on hand	£104	The subscription to the Bridge
Farm in hand	£956	and to widening the entrance of the
Lime Account	£70	town one meter £75
Weekly wage paid since April the 4 th (the time when this account was assessed)	£155	
Sandy disbursement	£50	
Paid William Crowdy on account	£60	
Beckett Tithing owed for their roads	£42	
Quarrying Stones	<u>£7</u>	
	<u>£1444</u>	

The rents received of the off going tenants, Gerring, Warner and Williams amount to £841

Your Lordship said the £500 to be expended in fitting up the house for Lady Effingham was to be defrayed out of the £10,000 taken up on Moses Ackerman's and other farms. £200 of the banking expenses arises out of Your Lordship's own timber. £230 is on Your Lordship's own residence, which with £181 expended on the same house last year is perhaps entitled to an application to the same fund. The remainder of the £500 which is not charged to Lady Effingham's house in the building accounts will be found in the weekly pages paid since April 4th and in some little matter of timber had out of the

timber yard since the timber account was paid up. The disbursements on account of building is ... £1403

From which deduct for your Lordship's dividend	£230
Lady Effingham	£222
Your Lordship's own Timber	<u>£209</u> <u>£861</u>
Will leave a balance expended on the building of	£542
The contingent expenses are swelled this year by the Inn Handler	£80
By the placing of good gates where there were none	£25
Exclusive of that portion which is charged in the building expenses	
By expenses incurred in letting farms	£15
The Plantations have been fenced and drained	
(which was much wanted), and this has increased the expense by	<u>£44</u>
	£164

Under these expenses the estate is coming fast into repair and this is value received for the money. It has not been dissipated upon unconscionable bills. Everything has been well looked after. But in some charges there is still room for reformation. On little time will come the remaining evils. I could wish to call the whole of the account even before your Lordship's that my observation might be called to each item on which I wished to make a remark.

I have nothing to add but that I look with pleasure and impatience for your Lordship's arrival at Shrivenham, which I hope your Lordship will reach in safety on Monday.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 55

Beckett 15th August 1818

My Lord

On Tuesday last I paid to Drummond £450 and to Moreland's £1150, £500 of the latter was in a bill at *** and your Lordship has had it for the interest in my account. The accounts your Lordship left here are copied with the duplicate ledger and I expect you will receive them about the time your Lordship receives this letter. At Michaelmas I proposed to make out an account of payments and receipts to that time and forward it to your Lordship.

Since my return from the North, I have been fully occupied so as to have had my attention wholly withdrawn from my own private concerns at Darlington. Indeed I cannot bring my mind to Beckett to there but with extreme reluctance. It was not till after I had an interview with my father's Executors on the Wednesday I left Sedgfield that I comprehended the prospect of my Father's Will, nor did the Executors themselves understand it till that very day and then only by the explanation which the Attorney who made it does himself give of it. I believe it is utterly unintelligible of everyone else, and will ever remain so. I told your Lordship that my father had by his Will as well as by his Bond, give certain security to your Lordship and that this security had me up and also tied my family up, and I requested your Lordship to relieve us which request your Lordship graciously complied with and eased my spirits of an oppressive hand. It was not till this interview which I have named that I learned the Executors could renew the Bond for £500, but their capability to do so neither adds to nor diminishes one jot from the security your Lordship had before by the Bond and the Will. If I had known it, it is very probable I might have named it as attaching any consequence to it. A most fortunate thing however it is for me, that such is the case and for my family too. And as soon as I have leisure to attend to it, I will obtain a Bond signed by the Executors to your Lordship for the amount. This point was settled to be so at my interview with them and Mr Edward Pease was to write to your Lordship they had the power to give such a bond. My sister, and also Mrs Middleton of Darlington, who was in constant communication with

my father assured me it was my father's intention and belief that he had left my portion in such a form as to be found entirely under my own disposal and direction whereas this Attorney (Mr Melburn, I think they call him) has wisely drawn his genius to devise the locking up of this property from myself and all my children till the youngest child I have, or shall ever have, attain the age of twenty one years, and in such instance the property can then be touched only by my surviving children provided I myself be dead, but should I be then living none of us can touch it. They must wait for my death. Such is Mr Melburn's own exposition of the Will. No other person I believe knows what it means. I am sorry so much of this paper should be consumed by my own affairs.

I beg now to speak of the farms. The fallows will be effectually secured so that next year there will be 43½ acres of Wheat. The Wheat growing in Mrs Ackerman's field was well harvested days since. The miscalculation of the produce in the Bean crop last year makes me timid in estimating the quantity of Wheat per acre. I think I hazard nothing in saying there will be 40 bushels to the acre. I understand there is a wager depending between two persons whether the quantity is over 40 or 50 bushels. The Turnips this year again are admirable as to the regularity of the plant, but they are late. If it come rain they will be the best crop in this part of the county for the ground is quite clean, and it is manured like a hot bed. There are 11 acres of Turnips. As the Wheat came early off Mrs Ackerman's field, and as the field is quite clear of weed, it is ready for the immediate reception of Turnips. The first softening shower of rain we have that field shall be ploughed and sown with Turnips. The warmth of the soil from the hot summer and the activity of the Lime which was put into it last year, will I hope produce a good crop. The fly has been very destructive to Turnips in this neighbourhood. Some persons I am told have seen three or four times. But we were prepared for such an attack. The fly took our turnips, but there was a quantity of Lime previously prepared for such an event. By exposure to the open air it was pulverised and as soon as the Turnips showed any symptoms of the fly we ran this powdered Lime along the drills in one day and made all safe. As the season was very uncertain, I had double the usual quantity of seed sown. A part of this Turnip ground was manured with Bones a part with Stable Manure and a part with Lime. The Lime was in a state of dust and poured thick into the drills. The weather has been dry ever since they were sown the 30th June and the 2nd of July. They have had one shower of rain of two or three hours continuance while I was at Sedgefield

and a shower of about one hours continuance since my return. The seed sown on the Bones was sown the first, then on the Stable Manure and lastly on the Lime. The Turnip roots not having yet reached the Bones show the least growth. The Turnips sown on the Stable Manure are more powerful, but the Turnips on the Lime drills, which when sown the last, are as powerful and roundest as it is possible for them to be under so droughty a season, and every seed seems to have grown, for they not only touched each other in the row but were three or four abreast in the same manner as Mustard and Aesser are sown in a garden for salads. The Barley is far more than an average crop and that which was the last sown and looked the worst will prove to be the best. It has gathered up surprisingly ... *missing* ... The second crop of Clover is allowed to seed.

The farming premises under operation are those of Thomas Wilson, at Longcott, late premises at Galleyhearns, Stall Pits and Stainswick. The improvements at each place will speak for themselves. Adjoining the farming premises now in the occupation of Thomas Rich, but which come into hand at Michaelmas were two cottages, the worst we have, and most inconveniently situated for their farming premises. I have often wished they were removed or taken down. Last Thursday week they took fire at noon day and were burnt to the ground by reason of a girl throwing some hot ashes to the dung hill behind the house. A subscription is made for the suffering which re-instates them in a better property than that which they have lost, and I am quite certain your Lordship's estate is improved by the accident. I believe every body sees it. Mr Berens wishes two cottages to be rebuilt, but I see no advantage to your Lordship in that. Quite the contrary and as 7 cottages were lately made, the town has a balance of 5 in favour of its convenience, for Thomas Lewis who sold your Lordship the premises has left Shrivenham.

The surplus Hay and all our Straw will sell at a very high price to be consumed on the premises and I propose to buy sheep for the Turnips. I have experienced many interruptions while writing this letter, which I name as my apology for not writing it better. I am much obliged to Mr Davison and I will be obliged to your Lordship to say so to him. I often think of my visit to Sedgefield with great pleasure, and I am very sensible of your Lordship's condescension and kindness on that occasion.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 56

Beckett 31st August 1818

My Lord

Herewith is an account of the state of rents as they were received, and of 3rd and subsequently to this day. The reason why Thomas Rich stands in arrears is because a part of his field was taken by us into hand this Spring, on an agreement to allow him the rent of this part from Michaelmas last, and the quantity of this piece of ground cannot be ascertained by admeasurement till our Barley be reaped, which having been late sown, is not yet ready for the sycle, but which when reaped will be the most productive crop of Barley we have. Mr Forty sent £300 on account and said he would settle the difference when he came to Beckett. By the third column it will appear the receipts are £3169 of this.

Amount the rents of Gerring, Manners & Williams are	841
Giles has had his hundred pounds allowed to him	100
The rest of Woodlands in	98
The half years rent of farm in hand	<u>124</u>
	1163

When I sent my accounts to your Lordship in London in June, I sent a letter stating the cash balance as it stood on that time which after accounting for the disposal of Gerring's & Co rents of £841 left a balance due to me and I think your Lordship said when you were last at Shrivenham (for I have no memorandum of that letter or statement) of above

	80
I have paid to your Lordship's bankers	<u>1,600</u>
	2843
To make this amount equal to the column of receipts require	<u>326</u>
	3169

By the latter end of this or the ensuing week I hope assuredly to send your Lordship a detailed account of disbursements since the last account which is found entered in the great book, and the farm accounts continued from June. At the same time I will explain how there comes to be a bill on Mr Wilcott for £500. Meanwhile I will just observe that at the meeting with my father's executors it became a concern of theirs, how to devise a legal mode for them to come to my relief, and I pointed that out to them as being the one recommended to me by my solicitor, and which was acceded to. But all this will require an official explanation to which I will appropriate an entire letter. Meantime I have to say that the bill on Mr Wilcott will be duly honoured, and that Mr Wilcott and his family who live together at Dorking are in a very respectable way, having *** at present little short of £1000 income, with considerably further expectations. Mr Wilcott was Chief Solicitor to Mr Dennison on his contested election for Surrey, and a more honourable minded man I have never met with. Mr Clarke of Stockton is a great admirer of him and I might further say that in his presence Mr Clarke and I became two children. The latter observations however are foreign to real business and nothing but the singular situation in which Mr Melburn has placed my property could have weighed with me to stray one jot out of the beaten track of business. I ask this deviation of your Lordship's clemency, and I doubt whether I could legally be served by your Lordship in any other way than which is presented to me. It is even doubtful whether your Lordship could have secured me had I previously consulted your Lordship. Mr Wilcott is of opinion I could not have been assisted. The Executors said they could not serve me with safety to themselves in any other way. They would give their bond, they would pay it and ask no questions. Until I send the detailed account I beg your Lordship to believe I have not one farthing of your Lordship's property but what is in your Lordship's service.

I have your Lordship's letter of the 17th and 19th ult. for although this letter was begun the 31st August, it is now the 1st September. I acknowledge the justice of your Lordship's observations to the fullest extent. It is so just that I will offer nothing in excuse, although I might otherwise plead in extenuation an almost unconquerable aversion to paper work found and rooted in me long before I had the honour of knowing your Lordship. In future I will in justice to your Lordship and also to myself, strive against it with all my power, and I take the full shame of shame that is due to me on my recent oversight. But

this I have in my favour with your Lordship that I never postpone or neglect a necessary account, or one that any way involves the positive interest of your Lordship. Since my health has improved again, I revert to my long accustomed habit of early rising. I am on the ground before any of the work people, and during the whole day, I enter both my body and mind into whatever is going forward. My daily account is weekly made out. Nothing but the ardent desire I have for to please your Lordship in all things could have induced me to adopt or made of accounts, which from the exactness of them and at the detail of workmen's writing they require meets more than any other thing, perhaps the only bad habit I have full in the teeth.

No formal ending

Letter No 57

Beckett 3rd September 1818

My Lord

I wrote on the 1st inst. when I said it was my intention to write the day following in what related to the Farm. I have before named that the Wheat was well housed. Since that time about 13 or 14 acres of Barley has been equally well gathered. The growth of this Barley is much stunted in the Straw by reason of the dry season, which has now held with us, I believe fourteen or fifteen weeks, with the exception of 2 or 3 transient showers. The late sown Barley, which was the least promising in appearance gathered up so well afterwards, that it is likely to be the better crop. I suppose there will be 28 acres of Barley in the whole, on half of which is not got ripe enough to cut. The Turnips look green and very healthy but want rain. Mr Clarke my relative who lives near Leeds and who is a practical farmer, was here last week and on his return home from Cheltenham and he says ours are the healthiest Turnips he has seen this year, but that are late. We calculate

there is 11 acres of them. When I mentioned it to be my intention to sow the arable field bought of Sarah Ackerman with Turnips, and which has this summer been what it was because I perceived on my London journey many farmers doing the same, and the early period of the harvest this year was favourable to such an intention. For this purpose I had the field ploughed and manured with 120 large cart loads of manure, but I received your Lordship's letter mentioning Rape. Rape then is the crop and Mr Clarke says that if the frosts in December or January should miss it and turn it black he would advise to plough it in as a manure instead of eating it with sheep, and the result would probably be that we should next year have an exuberant crop of Barley, and supposing the Barley to be sown with Clover seed, and Wheat to be sown on the Clover ley, the Wheat would probably be as productive as the Barley. He says the greatest crops of Barley he ever know produced, have been produced under this management. But your Lordship will perhaps hereafter direct me in this matter. The field No 96 called "the field adjoining the new stables" was so well filled with manure, and had so heavy a crop of Turnips last year, which were all eaten on with sheep too, and this year so *** a crop of Straw, I am disposed to believe little or no impoverishment of soil can have taken place in consequence of this year's Barley crop and therefore I felt a strong inclination to repeat the process of a Barley crop next Spring, same as if we had not had one this season, and as green food is likely to be dear beyond precedent in this neighbourhood, I propose to sow it with Rape too, which can be eaten on with sheep or ploughed in, as shall seem expedient. The Rape will be sown in the course of a few days. Nothing can be clear of weed than this field. This ground is thinner of soil than any field in the farm. That part of the field No 9 called "Daysfield" which was Turnips last year and Barley this, I propose to be Beans next year. But in doing so, I go contrary to my inclination, for I am desirous to have the whole of this field brought in to one field of crop. This field is 9a. 1r. 32p. and it is constantly in two different crops. At this moment one part is Barley stubble, and the other is Turnips. The Barley part of the field being full of manure and fower, which has not been exhausted, and indeed is a very slight degree brought out this season, if I have your Lordship's permission by return of Post, I would instantly plough the Barley stubble and sow Rape, same as in the instance of Ackerman's field and the field adjoining the new Stables, and sow it again with Barley next Spring in conjunction with that portion of the same field which is now in Turnips, which next Spring will also have to be sown with Barley, then we get it all into one sort of compact husbandry. Were it my own

field I would treat it this way although some little pecuniary disadvantage might attend it. But I question whether this would be the case. The field No 71 called, 'Stall Pit Piece" is our grand operation in the farming way this year, and which for subsequent profit, I shall consider my sheet-anchor. This field saturated as it was with wet, and then by the dry season baked as hard as stone wall, has at great expense been subdried and I believe it will prove one of the best, if not the very best, cornfield on your Lordship's estate. William Radway (one of your Lordship's pensioners now between 89 - 90 years of age) tells me it is 64 years since this field was fallowed. He was at the fallowing of it being then about 21 years old. When your Lordship rode over this field in June, your Lordship observed that part of it which had then been twice ploughed, that you never saw a field abound so much with wild "Rape," I think your Lordship called it. But the part which had not been ploughed at all did then exhibit much phalanx of Thistles, Dockings, Quick Grass, Water Weeds and Wild Rape, as sufficiently manifested what the crops of corn must have had to contend with the last half century. I am told Ackerman's family have held this field 48 years. Had he done justice to himself he ought to have purchased his whole farm with the accumulated profits of this one field. If it please God we have no blight nor mildew, I hope we shall have £500 of Wheat and Straw off this field next year. It is 19½ acres. The next field of which I speak is the field No 33 called "the lower clay land" 14a. 2r. 25p, late Gerring. This field was taken into hand because it was a dead weight to the letting of this farm. It inherited all the faults of Ackerman's field without its merits. I trust never the less to make it profitable, as well as to improve it. The most stubborn soil gives way to perseverance. When it is brought into order it will let well enough. I intend to write again tomorrow or the day after on other matters.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 58

Beckett 12th September 1818

Beckett. Lord Viscount Barringtons Cash Account with G. Merryweather

14 July 1818. To a Present made by Lord B to G. M.	£50	
11 Aug 1818. To rent of Woodland	£98. 5. 10	
To Cash to Drummond	£450	
To Cash and a Bill to Morelands	<u>£1150</u>	£1748.5.10
To expense of making the New Road in April 1818		£21.18.6½
To January 1817 omitted in the General Summary		
To Isaac Giles an allowance on entering Ackerman's Farm		£100
To Disbursements viz:-		
Buildings	£349. 14. 5	
Charity	£7. 0. 6	
Contingent expenses	£41. 7. 9½	
Game & Fish expenses	£0. 10. 6½	
Postages	£0. 8. 6.	
Roads (new)	£7. 11. 8½	
Stewards Salary 5 months	£125. 0. 0.	
Taxes & Assessments	£3. 17. 10	£535.11.3½
Brick accounts, viz the amount which that are disbursements that exceed the present receipts		£105. 5. 9.
Lime account, viz the amount which that are disbursements that exceed the present receipts		£107. 11. 5½
Farm in hand	£1230.18.11	£1443.16.1½
Paid William Crowdy on account	£60. 0. 0	
Paid sundry persons for account which will be repaid. Of this amount Beckett Tithing owes £43. 5. 5 and Thomas Plumber for Cartage £7.16		<u>£56.7.2</u>

£3965.18.11

15 June 1818. By Balance of Accounts	£516.6.11¼	
11 th Aug 1818. By Interest on a Bill for £500 at 12 months	£4.4.0	
12 th Sept 1818. By rents received as of the account lately sent	£3169.0.11¼	£90
By cash received for Wood sold	£14.4.4½	
By so much received in payment in part of debts Standing our which includes William Ansell's amount of to £329.2.6 as per the account delivered	£28.8.0	<u>£3732.4.3</u>
Balance		£233.14.8½

My Lord

The above is a statement of my cash account as it stands at this day. William Ansel has been taken sick within these few days which has delayed my writing rather longer than I intended. I have had to look after his department myself. I before acquainted your Lordship of the singular way in which the Attorney had constructed my Father's Will, and of the consequence thereof to me and my children. I think to, that I named to your Lordship it was not my father's intention to have his Will so made for my sister, Mrs Napler and her daughters, who are adult persons and Mrs Middleton of Darlington all assured me that my father fully understood he had left me an *** direction of the portion he had bequeathed to me. The Executors professed a great desire to save me but they said they could not legally relieve us but through the medium of your Lordship and it was settled they would give your Lordship a Bond for £500. They would sell my father's land in October or November and out of the deposit money of 10 percent which would be received at the time of sale they would take up the Bond of £500 on your Lordship asking them so to do. They assured me there was no other way to come at this money, and as the matter was among friends, the occasion of this proceeding would be well understood. Meanwhile it might by chance be advisable I should stand no circumstances with your Lordship, as that your Lordship could if necessary say you stood on ground which entitled you to receive the amount of the Bond. The probability was, there might be no occasion for this precaution, but I am advised to guard against the possibility. In truth my

Lord I find myself constrained to intrust you with a painful secret. I am obliged to be of opinion that my sister Mrs Naylor is very culpable in the construction of my father's Will, not only in docking me of a thousand or twelve hundred pounds which my father intended to leave me beyond what he really has left me, but also in devising the means of tying up the residue of my property, and property of our other brother and sister. There is a clause in my father's Will empowering the Executors to lend to Mr Naylor for an indefinite time a sum of £3000 if he chooses it. Mr Naylor has chosen to enjoy this accommodation, and for two generations the accommodation of this sum might have rested with Mr Naylor's family to the great prejudice of mine. The managing Executor who lives at Yarm is a person totally devoted to my sister's views, without perceiving perhaps that is only one part of the machinery which is first put into action by Mrs Naylor for the [benefit] of her family. I believe that instructions in my father's Will for the Executor to lend Mrs Naylor £3000, over and above paying his wife her own portion, would have been very harmless and inoperative on two quarters and on a Methodist who is as obstinate as a Turk, if my sister by locking of the property of her brothers and sisters had not provided them with funds for this service independent of their own. There is also another very useful provision in this Will, which is, that the Executors are held harmless if any loss should arise from this point of their trust. My father's last Will was made within a year of his death. It was made by a fresh Attorney, not my friend Mr Clarke, and I believe the whole of the Executors were changed. My sister said very truly in a letter she wrote to me nearly a year before my father's death, that he frequently wandered in his mind, and did not know occasionally what he said or did, so much was his memory affected. I am obliged to run into this digression for want of knowing better how to give your Lordship the time state of things and a clear view of the ground on which I stand. Your Lordship may rely upon it, that my family would never have seen another shilling of my father's property but for the intervention of that providence which frequently frustrates the deepest laid schemes. I arrived at Darlington at a lucky period. My sister and her husband and family were in great tribulation. I learnt from my sister that Mr Naylor had [retired] from business some time past, having given it up to his oldest son, reserving a payment out of it of £500 a year for their lives. This annuity and the income of their private fortune placed them in very agreeable circumstances. They had also placed their second son in business, their capability of doing so was doubtless increased by the arrangement of my father's Will, and every thing went on surmising by [and] by a

combination of events which I need not detail, the younger son broke all to pieces, and the elder son by overstocking himself bought himself and a large portion of the family property into the greatest jeopardy imaginable. This was an occasion not to be lost. In a conversation with my sister, I made a powerful appeal to the monitor within and it had its affect. She let go her firm grasp and terrified at the impending danger, made all haste to release me from my difficulties. That inexorable unfeeling man of Yarms, who would have seen me perish rather than advance me a shilling, after being closeted with my sister relapsed of his intentions and became quite friendly. He desired I would write your Lordship by that days Post to say they would give your Lordship a Bond immediately for £500, and that they would pay it without asking questions. He further said the land should be sold in October or November as I have named already, and that the Bond should be paid out of the deposit money etc. I hope all will continue in this mind, and that through my sister's instrumentality I may come at the residue of what my father has left me by finding security for the Executors against any actions from my youngest children fifty years hence. To make their minds easy I hope to get Mr & Mrs Naylor to unite in this security. For the thousand or twelve hundred pounds which is sequestered, I have no remedy but resignation and providence can restore it to us in some other way. The bill then, my land, or Mr Willett, is to provide against or relapsed on the part of Mr Naylor. My father's Will obliges the Executors to give your Lordship a Bond, and I will cause Mrs Naylor to have this done directly. Mr Willett by his acceptance for £500 not only becomes a farther security, but a negotiable security, thus putting your Lordship to no inconvenience. My mode of procedure in this singular cause has been well considered, and the plan adopted was thought the best one could hit upon. It was a great misfortune the first Bond was burnt, at least it appears so. I have so many evidences to my father's intention towards me that the recovery of the full amount would have intention towards me that the recovery of the full amount would have only been a protection to me of his intention. But I never choose to cherish unavailing regret. I am sorry I have had to make such a disclosure to your Lordship; but I hope your Lordship will receive it in confidence, for with the exception of this undue partiality to her own interest my sister has excellent points, and I am desirous to be on affectionate terms both with her and her children.

I have received your Lordship's two last letters, and I thank you for the information as to the management of the farm and your Lordship's instructions shall be strictly complied with. I will order the Farmer's Journal and I am very desirous to have the practical book on manners. William Airs tells me our light land is apt to let the Wheat lose its root hold, so that the method to prevent it will be valuable information. Two thirds of the field No 96 is sown with winter taxa and I am happy to say that it now rains a pace. This will suit our Turnips safe lanes and barren pastures well. The Barley as well as the Wheat is now all safe in the Rick without wet or damage. We got the last of it led yesterday. All sorts of grain but Wheat will seem very short in Berkshire. In some instances eight or ten acres of Beans have been brought home in one waggon load. The appearance of corn in the North was far better than with us in general and I saw no where any Turnips to be compared with those of your Lordship's. Mr Clarke had the next best crops to your Lordship, and I think those at Beckett are the nearest to them. They are accounted uncommonly healthy, and are as regular as soldiers drawn up in rank and file, but I fear they were too late sown to attain a great size. I am not however acquainted with the growth of Turnips. A dearth of provision for cattle [edible] is so fully expected here that people are busy sowing Turnips now. By your Lordship's kindness in permitting me a free agency in the management of this little farm, I adopted horses instead of oxen in the late inward of our teams. I was induced to do so from the consideration of the vast quantity of cartage which lay before us and Mr Williams (Sir John Throgmorton's Steward) and James Fidel, were also of this opinion. But from my observation this summer I have not a doubt but your Lordship was right, and that we were all wrong, and indeed Fidel on further conversation is quite of this opinion too. We have agreed stock of Hay, and if the price of Hay this Winter should prove any thing like what is conjectured to do, I should feel disposed after Wheat sowing to sell five of our horses, and replace them next Spring with Oxen. This will enable us to dispose of a great quantity of Hay with advantage, which can be eaten in our own fields. I shall be very glad to have your Lordship's counsel in this matter. The Barley which came off the Barnicles last year (4 acres) filled more room in the barn than 13½ acres do this year, and yet our crop is called very good this year. Next year we shall have 44 acres of Wheat, 11 Barley, 33 Turnips, 5 Beans and the residue of the arable land in such crop as your Lordship shall appoint. In the farm in hand, Plumbers (late Williams) and Giles (late Ackerman) these are above 100 acres of bare fallows this Summer. There is a field on which your Lordship has a mortgage of £180. It was

announced to me on Saturday evening that it was to be sold the following Monday, of course I had no time to consult your Lordship. If your Lordship refer to the plan of the estate, this field will be found bounded on the North by the Faringdon Road, on the South by No 234, on the east by No 227. It contains 11 acres and is one of the best fields and in the best condition of any field in that neighbourhood. I have bought this field for £610 but if your Lordship should not approve of the purchase, I can have the money for it. I can let it to a perfectly good tenant at £28 a year. I consulted with Mr Crowdy on the matter and it was through his instrumentality it did not go higher. it is to be paid for at Michaelmas. I got Mr Fidel to inspect this field with me, and he says it is worth the money.

I began this letter on Saturday night, but the subject of my sister's treatment of me so affected me, I was obliged to give it up till Monday, when I proceeded with that so disagreeable an explanation. On Monday we have no Post and Mr Airs being confined to his bed by sickness, and the sky being very cloudy and portending rain, I superintended the farm the whole day myself, being occupied with loading Barley so that when I finished it is now Tuesday morning the 15th.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 59

Beckett 21st September 1818

My Lord

Today being very rainy and being in consequence confined to the house, I take this period of leisure to submit to your Lordship my sentiments on a regulation loudly called for here, which if affected will add to your Lordship's income from five to six hundred a year, and at the same time greatly improve the industry and morality of the place. The regulation I alluded to, is a rectification of the management of our Poor Rates. I will go at

length into the subject for I had better in some instances be *** than by an attempt at a useless brevity, leave your Lordship unacquainted with any essential part of the ground on which we shall have to maintain the combat for such by chance it may happen to pursue, although I hope it may turn out otherwise. In laying this subject before your Lordship, I propose first to state how the above arise and what I conceive to be the extent of this. Next what I apprehend will be the obstacles to encounter in the rectification of those abuses. Thirdly what steps I propose to take to overcome those obstacles. And lastly what may be the probable result to your Lordship and your Lordship's tenantry. The subject being thus fully treated of, I can benefit by the observations of your Lordship and you can appear as much or as little as you please in these movements, or not at all if your Lordship chooses. In coming to this discussion, I beg to take an entire credit with your Lordship for acting on perfectly impartial and independent principles and feelings. I can have nothing personal to qualify. In this effort I shall have to encounter much unpopularity and subject myself to endless slander and conspiracies, some of which will be discountenanced by those around me who could best discountenance them. In the success of my efforts, I will command the respect of the intelligent part of the community and in the last instance confirm an established displeasure towards me in the breast of the only man now residing in this village, whose regard I place any considerable value upon. But if I begin, I will succeed or I will die by the effort, and having succeeded I shall possess the approbation of my own mind, which is of infinitely more importance to me than any disapprobation I may incur in another quarter.

The Poor Rates at Shrivenham are now from a thousand to thirteen hundred pounds a year. Under the same system of management as prevails at present, the increase of poor rates is necessarily impelled forward by so strong an impulse, that in a very few years the rates will be £2000 a year, and as the increase adds to the evil in a geometrical proportion, I dare engage that by the time your son shall attain your Lordship's own age, the Beckett Estate will be found absorbed or nearly absorbed in Poor Rates. I speak my Lord as a practical man much conversant with this subject, I am not predicting as a man the evil. During the last two years, I have frequently assured Mrs Berens our Poor Rates have no right to exceed £250 to £399. No Parish is better circumstanced to get along with a small poor rate than Shrivenham. When I was at Darlington I learnt their population was 6000 persons and the Poor Rates £2700 a year. By the census of 1811 it appears the population

of Shrivenham and Beckett was 639 persons. On the Darlington scale this would make the Poor Rates with us about £300 a year. But I know no reason why Darlington should be considered the standard of perfection in respect to Poor Rates, nor why Shrivenham may not attempt and ever succeed in equating any place which hitherto has been the most fortunate in this respect. I named Darlington not as a formidable authority, but a recent one, and close in your Lordship's own neighbourhood. In stating the causes of the abuse which prevails in the Poor Rates at Beckett, I would say one cause is that no individual attends sufficiently to a business which is every body's concern. The second cause is that the excellent person who presides here as a Magistrate, and who also maintains a sacerdotal character is too fond of seeking popularity from the lowest order of the people, and the third cause is and in my opinion the most operative cause, is patronage which Mrs Hare affects with the same class of people. A clever and active woman and full of energy, but putting her talents and influence in an unfortunate direction is by far the most [frightful] cause of the enormous Poor Rate to which this estate is subject. Believe me my Lord, I have not the slightest desire to be personal in discussing this subject for the purpose of providing a remedy, I am merely stating what I consider to be the facts. I will now examine the extent and affects of this evil. Your Lordship's property is assessed at three fourths of the whole property of this Parish. If the average Poor Rates may now be stated at £1100 the proportion to be saved in my opinion is £800. Of this saving, £600 applies to your Lordship. When a new tenant applies for a farm, the first step he takes is to ascertain the amount of Poor Rates his new farm stands chargeable with, and this regulates the rent he will give to your Lordship. By so much the more he pays to the Poor Rate, so much the less he pays to the landowners. This is [invariably] the case. Your Lordship then, without any unkind intention on the part of Mr Berens, Mrs Berens, and Miss Keane is assuredly taxed to the extent I have stated. I have not a doubt of it. Thus much for my first proposition. The obstacle to be encountered in the rectification of this unfortunate state of things will, I apprehend be as follows. First the opposition which Mr Berens may meet it with individually at the Vestry meetings, then again the counteraction he can give to the decision of the Vestry meeting if it goes contrary to him in his office of a Magistrate. Next the unpopularity which will be excited against the author of this intended reformation, and lastly the excessive apathy of many who wish this reformation, but who will take no hand to help it forward. I say nothing of the real personal danger to the person who shall attempt to clean not the anger

stable, which may cast it short of its completion. I have inadvertently omitted another obstacle, namely an unfavourable impression which Mr Berens may give of this attempt to his brother Magistrate, for I foresee a good deal of petty sessions business in that matter before it be completed. I really believe better of Mr Berens than to think he will descend to this kind of attack. I must not however lose sight of the possibility of his doing so, and I am sure if he does, it will not flow from a [conscience] of the heart, but an error of the head. Before I state the measures I propose to adopt to supersede these obstacles, I beg to premise that certain families of this village who dip the longest into the Poor Rates are very exceptionable as to character. They are the idle, selfish arrogant and forward part of our community; they are also the most obsequious and flattering. The homage these people pay to Mrs Hare chimes in with her foibles and strips her of her discernment. The same remark applies to Mr & Mrs Berens. All the world sees it but themselves, and it is a matter extremely regretted. The paymaster to some of these families are enormous. The week preceding mid Summer last year, Sealey's family alone received at the rate of £2.6.9 a week. If it may be perceived such a receipt as this in the face of Hay time and Harvest may be a standard of their weekly receipt throughout the year, that family alone had appropriated to themselves £3000 of your Lordship's landed property. I never could ascertain what they have received, for Joseph B Hughes the deputy overseer and the Parish Clerk, countenanced by some unknown authority refused me the books, which I begged to see for the *** of this point. Divers other families equally undeserving are in like manner subjects of favouritism, through the like ends. General assertions have not the weight of particular instances, therefore when I have run through my argument I will by way of appendix instance some particular cases, which if called on to do so, I will make good before any persons living. I now proceed to my arrangements for the cure of this disorder, the stopping the increase of it, and bringing back to your Lordship fifteen or eighteen thousand pounds worth of your Lordship's land, which has thus become sequestered from your Lordship's use. There is a great call for cottage houses in Shrivenham. The lower order of people being sure of maintenance will not seek settlements in any other parishes if they can avoid it, and people from the neighbouring parishes endeavour to belong to this parish if they can so manage. In is therefore not unusual for divers families in one cottage. I propose against Michaelmas to give many of our cottagers notice to quit, accompanied with an explanation that at the end of the year those persons who make the best effort to do without parish assistance shall always find

a preference in the cottages and the gardens. This procedure must be acted upon, and the lower part must either awake to industry or be unhoused. A reformation of habits connected with a diminution of Poor Rates, or an emigration to some fresh field of idleness must take place. This is one step towards a reformation. It would be a desirable auxiliary measure if the money paid for clothing and educating two girls was expended on the children of those who receive the least relief from the Poor Rates, and this distinction alone would be likely to put it in the way of assisting, the most modest, the most industrious, and the most deserving. The next step to be taken is to give a regular attendance at the Vestry meetings held for the management of the Poor. Hitherto there has been no discussion at these meetings. The known wishes of one individual have always swayed every thing, so that without his having to put forth an exertion of authority, an acquiescence and submission on the part of every person has always been ready, however contrary to the wishes and judgement of the parties. Henceforth it must be otherwise. The public business must become more of a matter of discussion than it has been, provided there really do exist a difference of opinion between any of the parties present, and if the points in difference cannot be settled otherwise, they must go to the vote. If the act which passed last sessions of Parliament had not taken place, I believe such a muster of small house labour might always have been summoned, as to have kept your Lordship's estate in continual vassalage. But this act which gives six votes to each individual who is assessed at six times twenty five pounds a year, will effectually emancipate your Lordship's property so far as relates to the decisions if the Vestry in matters relating to the Poor. The next obstacle which have to be encountered are those of the applications to the Magistrate resident at Shrivenham, and to the petty sessions at Faringdon. I rather apprehend that if Mr Berens finds me perseveringly follow up my measures at the Vestry, and find the decisions there continually in favour of my measures, he will not like to counter act the determinations there, by his sole authority elsewhere. If he does, he places himself in an ungracious situation with the chief of his parishioners. He will rather recommend the applicants to apply to the meetings of justices at Faringdon, and there it is I anticipate the struggle to take place. Very well, let it be so. It is the weight of reason and justice that ought there to prevail. In justice not only tinctured with mercy, but (where the Poor are concerned), clothed with mercy. So much I myself will advocate, but it is the enormous favouritism toward the lying flattering part of our community which costs your Lordship so large a property which I am solicitous to

regulate, and which I assuredly will regulate. The debates before the Magistrates at Faringdon must always be held middle class of life present. I want no more than this impartial tribunal of the public opinion, before whom I am willing to commit my own good name, and sustain your Lordship's interests. If things should come to this unfortunate pass, I am willing to abide by all the [criticism] which may arise to me. I have no apprehensions of the result. I know what it is to be effected by perseverance in a sound cause. If I proceed with temper and good humour, give good words and hard arguments, and when the arguments possess my opponent, relax a little so as to convince the mind of the Magistrates I argue for the truth, not victory. Even preconceived prejudices will give way and very enemies will become friends. I have often found this to be the case in the course of my experience. By an exercise of forbearance in public on such occasion I may even win the heart of my opponent. I did not however flatter myself with too much, and if this should happen it is more than I expect.

In winding up this argument I have to observe that the favourable result of this business would to your Lordship be the reclaiming of all the landed property which is alienated by this abuse of Poor Rate and which condemns £600 a year of your Lordship's income [unfairly]. It not only will reclaim the property already now to waste but by reforming the habits of the poor, and calling forth their energies and exertions, it will cut short the disease which is spreading like a cancer over the whole estate. The poor of this parish look to a maintenance from the Poor Rates, and they who receive clothes and education look for clothes and education with as much confidence, and as little thanks as if they were entitled to the property. When this reformation is effected which I propose, and the tenantry facilitate themselves upon the advantage of it, and I ask what the advantages are, and they state, "not only the present saving, but the interception of the evil which would have soon doubled itself by the increase of that class of population which occurs and the evil," may and they further admit it was through my instrumentality this waste of money has been presented. May I not ask, and whose bread do you eat? And when they answer, "Lord Barrington's" cannot I fairly put the case thus, "Well gentlemen, you who are now tenants, all took your farms at a rent subject to the Poor Rates as they stood at the time of your take, and you are now unexpectedly reclined to such an amount, this property must in reason revert to my Lord Barrington, whose servant I am; and it is his not only in equity, but it is a fair remuneration for the expense incurred by placing you

all in such comfortable habitations as those in which you now reside. You gentlemen also had your peculiar advantage arising from the measures which have been adopted; you are freed from the alarms and cost of an increasing Poor Rate. As for the old tenants, not only the same argument holds good with them, but the easy rents under which they hitherto hold their farms, makes it scarcely an object of their consideration." There my Lord, or words to this effect may fairly be used on so happy a consummation of the plan I have laid before your Lordship.

Before, however I would enter on this plan, I propose to request of Mr Berens to analyse the whole of that part of our community who receive Poor Rates. I would reduce the families into alphabetical order, and then take the summary of them; by which we would become acquainted of what each family consisted, and with the amount each family deserved a year from the rates, circumstances which the parties who are assessed, are at present utterly unacquainted with. This is a discernment I attempted to gain last year, but which was very offensively resisted by Mr Hughes the deputy overseer, and who spoke in a way as to manifest he felt himself supported by sufficient authority as he thought. My health at that time was very indifferent, and being subject to occasional great depression of spirit, I was afraid of drawing more business upon me than I was capable of managing at one time. Therefore, I postponed till a more convenient opportunity this branch of my duty. I gave Hughes a ruled paper as a guide and told him I would pay him for his trouble to make other like it, and fill up the blanks for the last year, and he promised me he would do so. And such was certainty his intention for a time, and he made a beginning with it. But it was soon manifest to his principal what a strange piece of information this would bring to a focus, and therefore Hughes afterwards declined proceeding with his work, and said, "He should not do so unless the law compelled him," and added, "he did not care for me." I need only subjoin a specimen of the paper I had prepared for your Lordship to be sensible what the information must be, which it would produce. I will close all these observations by adding that if each individual parish in the Kingdom had only one spirited man in it, who would calmly and steadily follow of an investigation of the mismanagement of the Poor Rates, and were he supported by one or two sensible Magistrates, it would do more to rectify the awful state of this country in respect to its poor, than all the acts of Parliament which can be passed. But I almost doubt whether such a phenomenon exists as such a person supported by two Magistrates. If

such a Magistrate as Mr Durell resided in this neighbourhood I could make more progress in a month than I can now in a year. I have been told one of the Mr Mills entertains similar sentiments to myself on the management of the poor in this neighbourhood, but which of the Mr Mills it is I cannot tell, nor do I know how to get access to him or I could greatly facilitate my proceedings.

Name	Age	Persons able to work					Persons not able to work						
		Man	Woman	Sons	Daugh	Total	Man	Woman	Sons	Daugh	Total		
1. Sealy Joseph (jnr)	36	1											
2. Sealy Ann	34		1										
3. Sealy Mary	19					1	1						
4. Sealy Wm	16			1	1	1							
5. Sealy Rachel	8								1	1			
6. Sealy Ann	5								1	1			
7. Sealy Jane	3								1	1			
Weekly payments		1	1	1	2	4			3	3			

In the above ruled paper the names and the sums are all supercilious and are intended only for illustration.

My paper is gone. All is going well at Beckett. This rain will do much good. I will send my appendix to this subject.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 60

Beckett 10th October 1818

My Lord

On the evening of the 23rd, 24th and 25th of September, I wrote your Lordship a detailed account of the management of the Poor Rates at Shrivenham. This account I intended as a supplement to my last letter on the subject of the Poor. Although this statement did not embrace two cases which were similar to each other, yet it run to a great length, and on reflection I suppressed this letter, lest it should admit of a surprise in that it was a satire. I flatter myself a due regulation may be effected in our Poor Rates progressively and to a great amount without any unkind feelings between the parties who at this time differ in opinion on. I received you Lordship's letters of the 20th and the 26th September and I am governed by them in my proceedings. The Title deeds of the field are now ready [and] the sum wanted is £430. I have let the field to Mr John Wrighton of Shrivenham at £28 a year. A more desirable tenant cannot be. I have let Haines land exclusive of the house and garden at £27 a year. Mr Haines is in the house at present. If land should be for that house, the Cherry Orchard can be part to it. Everything is going on well here. Mr Warner's farm was always represented as incapable of producing good Cheese. Mr Lewis the present tenant sold his Cheese at Reading Fair at 105/- per cwt and the latest made at 95/- per cwt. Mr Gerring's son late of Stainswick was present when he sold them. Mr Gerring's own Cheese is sold among the small shops at home at 56/- per cwt. So much for management. It will be a pleasant thing for me in Winter to organise the education of 10 boys, and I judge the plan of putting out boys as apprentices an excellent example to the Parish to do the same. I am glad your Lordship's Harvest comes on so well. We have had very fine weather lately for agricultural pursuits. We are busy with the last ploughing for Wheat, but have not sown any yet. I do not know that I have anything of consequence to add which respects your Lordship.

About a fortnight since Mrs Merryweather on passing over the Court Yard, had the misfortune to fall and break her leg, but although both the bones were broken, and the longer bone protruded through her stocking, she is likely to do very well. An eminent

Surgeon happened to be on a visit at Mr Dixons from London, and he as well as our family Surgeon, both say Mrs M will neither be a cripple nor will her leg be disfigured. The pavement of the yard was slippery by reason of a recent shower of rain.

I had almost omitted to state that the renewal of the Lease of Stainswick Farm is called £1086. by Oddie the Steward and it is to be paid on or before the 31st of December next.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather.

Letter No 61

Beckett 15th October 1818

My Lord

I have the pleasure to state to your Lordship that a considerable reform has taken place in our Poor Rates. The weeks previous to mid Summer last year, the rates were £84.8.1, This present week they are £57.15, being a difference of nearly £17 a week. If this can be brought to be stationary or amended, which I am certain in due time it may be, your Lordship will readily see the effect it must have on your Lordship's rents. Within the last three months I have had many conversations with Mr Berens on the subject of our Poor Rates, and I have been explicit in stating it as my opinion that our Rates ought not to exceed £250 to £300 a year. I have said so to the chief inhabitants, and I have always given my reasons for thinking so. Our Vestries did usually consist of three or four persons inclusive of Mr Berens and Joseph Hughes. I have known them consist of only Mr Berens, Joseph Hughes and Mr Bowles' son of Beckett. For what was the use of Vestries where no discussion could be favourably received, that were contrary to the inclination of the preceding person? I have lately so ordered and framed my conversations with Mr Berens and with others, that Mr Berens could not but perceive the whole system of favouritism must give way under discussions where all the arguments lay on one side. I am this minute returned from a Vestry meeting, where I expressed a wish that the total amount

of the Rates paid the respecting families who received them, that we might all be made acquainted with the total annual sum received by each family. I urged to have this statement at a Vestry meeting a fortnight since, and Mr Berens advanced many obstacles why he thought it was not necessary. I cannot say they were reasons. At the meeting held today, which was by public notice, Mr Berens was not present. He went to Oxford just before the meeting took place, but he called at Joseph Hughes' house and had a long conversation with him, and then immediately set out for Oxford. At this meeting I could perceive all those persons were present who might be supposed to incline towards Mr Berens desire in any business which was likely to be brought forward there. I for my part had not desired a single tenant to attend this meeting; nor was there one of the recent new tenants present. This line of conduct I adopted from policy, and to avoid giving unnecessary offence. By the late Act of Parliament which gives six votes to each of your Lordship's tenants who have six times twenty pounds in years I am quite aware your Lordship's estate can by its own power always extricate itself from improper encumbrances, when it shall appear indispensable to resort to this its natural power. But an abstinence in the use of this power bespeaks more of moderation, and is more respectful towards Mr Berens, than an early and officious display of it would be. And I greatly doubt whether in a free country like ours, the full exercise of legitimate power is ever used advantageously except at the [last] resort. With respect to the management of the Poor at Shrivenham, the real fact is that Mr Berens has had the sole and undivided direction, no one whatever presuming to go into an opposition of any measure proposed by him, however much they might lament his views of the subject. I am obliged to believe that your Lordship's private charities, in conjunction with the Poor Rate, go nearly if not altogether to the exclusion of every other private charity in the place. I cannot prove this, but it is my firm belief it is the truth, and no more than the truth. It is the opinion of divers others as well as of myself, although it has never been more than half expressed to me, but I never seemed to take any notice of these intimations which have been partly given and partly suppressed. At a Vestry held a fortnight since consisting of four persons inclusive of Mr Berens and Joseph Hughes, I showed Mr Berens a paper ruled in the manner of the inclosed which I meant to be filled up with a summary of the amounts received by each family last year, which when added together formed so great an aggregate. I could not but observe how much Mr Berens countenance fell on inspecting it. What a singular document would this have been to the good people

of Shrivenham! And even to Mr Berens himself, who I am persuaded never sufficiently considered the waste which he has brought your Lordship's estate under, until it was presented to him in this point of view. It is not a month since I told Mr Berens it was my decided opinion, that your Lordship's tenants suffered unnecessary in their comforts on your Lordship suffered in your rents full £600 a year for want of a revisal of our Poor Rates. Neither at the Vestry today nor the Vestry held a fortnight since, nor at any former period could I come at the Poor's account from which to form this statement. As the sole motive for describing it was to effect a rectification of improper payments and as each week for some time past has exhibited the weekly list of payments pruned and cut down voluntarily by Mr Berens and Joseph Hughes themselves until it has descended from £24.8.1. per week to £7.15. I question whether it is not better to accept of the natural death of the abuse of our Poor Rates in the way it is taking place, than to press any longer for a measure, which however reasonable, appears to be so extremely obnoxious. I do not intend to push this matter farther, if there appear no occasion for it. I am not contending for victory, but the exercise of reason and common sense. My Lord, if this disposition on the part of Mr Berens continue, what a great thing has been accomplished by the display of a little firmness in a right matter? And what can this mean my Lord that ever since Mr Berens has found me resolved to go into this business of our Poor Rates (now some month or three weeks back) that family have been particularly attentive and condescending to mine, Mr Berens, Mrs Berens and the mixed country's frequently coming to my house, the ladies being very kind in sitting at Mrs M's bed side and showing her much attention at the same time saying many civil things to and of the children, so far beyond what even in our days of prosperity we were accustomed to hear from our nearest friends, that we do not know what to think of this sudden transition. Lady Effingham who has been at Shrivenham about a week accompanied Mr Berens yesterday to see Mrs M. I do not wish to imagine any gunpowder plot in this altered deportment on the part of Mr Berens' family, but it is only two or three weeks since I complained heavily to Mr Berens that Mrs Berens had hired as a servant to the Bishop of Durham, a woman who lived servant with us the first Summer of our coming here and who was discharged by Mrs Merryweather for every species of bad conduct, in revenge for which she became a tool in the hands of Hedges to slander and defame the whole family in the most shameless manner of which he, Mr Berens was well aware, because I had thought it proper at that time to write him fully on the subject of this bad woman's

calumnies. I expressed my surprise that Mrs Berens had withheld the usual courtesy of enquiry on such occasions, and that if this person did really go to the Bishop of Durham by Mrs Beren's recommendation, I should be under the necessity of acquainting my Lord Barrington of the circumstance for my own protection. I confess my Lord I did think myself not handsomely treated in this matter, and I expressed my self very determinedly although I hope very respectfully. The recommendation was subsequently withdrawn and I do not know where this woman went to. This is an incident I would not have named if at the Vestry today I had not perceived in Joseph Hughes a great and unimpressed spirit of hostility. It is very probable Mr Hughes either misunderstood, or exceeded the extent of his commission. Be this as it may, it is not likely at my age, and practised in public business, and acquainted with the nature and feelings of public assemblies as it has been my lot to be, that I should either by personal invective, or ill managed and unskilful debate on the part of my adversary be taken off my guard, or in the slightest degree show an uncomposed temper. Nor did I choose to waste an agreement on a matter where it must reflect on every person present, for such alone were the parties assembled. In reply to an observation this shoe-maker-boy made, 'that hitherto every thing had been harmony at the Vestry meetings, and that there was no disturbance of thus unanimity till I came,' I simply made answer that I believe I had not attended more than five Vestry meetings the three years and a half which I had been at Beckett, and all these within the last year only, so that I had not manifested any great disposition to disturb the harmony of what he called the Vestry. I could not however see how these attendances had been unjudicial to the public good, seeing our Poor Rates which last year at Midsummer were between £24 and £25 a week, were now this year in the month of October without any disturbance of harmony found manageable with little more than £7 a week. This observation closed the disagreeable part of the business of this meeting. The next point of business was, who should employ the people in Winter that the farmers had employed in the Summer? It was universally expected that your Lordship would. To this expression of their expectations I never opened my mouth at all. Joseph Hughes then produced an account of the amount of wage paid by the Parish to the men who quarried stone for your Lordship last Winter, showing that on the agreement the Parish had last (as I recollect) £48. To this I made answer that every shilling which had been paid by your Lordship, might be considered as so much gained by the Parish. That this apparent loss did not arise from want of an adequate price for the

quantity of stone quarried, but from want of experience and capacity in the direction of the Parish labour, and in the idleness of the labourers themselves, who were the spurge of the whole body of our labourers and who also had not been furnished by the Parish with tools that were applicable and necessary for the employment. To this remark no answer was made. Mr Hughes then produced a written paper stating he had given 27 weeks attendance to the labourers while employed in the quarrying of this stone for your Lordship, and he left it to the honour of the Vestry to say what must be the amount of his remuneration for this 27 weeks attendance. Some of the farmers present thought he deserved forty shillings, but Mr John Fairthorne the leading overseer of the Poor thought he deserved four pounds for an attendance of 27 weeks. Some one said he thought £4 was not an adequate remuneration for the time expended. On this observation, I remarked that if Mr Hughes was under paid this was the time to amend the mistake but the general voice was that £4 must be the sum. Mr Hughes never thought it worth while to remind the Vestry that he already was paid by an annual salary for managing the Poor's concerns, and I am sure I did not think it worth more. Mr Hughes has at least 50 scholars. Whether the alienation of 27 weeks of his time was any disadvantage to their improvement I am not able to say. This matter being adjusted, the next thing was the adjustment of the weekly wage to be paid for labourers till Lady Day next. After so much philanthropy as one had heard expressed for the comfort of the Poor, one would have imagined that same thing was going to be proposed greatly to the advantage of these poor people. After it had been expressly avowed by Joseph Hughes in answer to applications made by some of the farmers for labourers, that at this time the parish had neither man, woman nor child capable of work, but what was employed, and as it was notorious that the wages if this present day are from 10/- to 12/- a week, and that many Highworth people are now at work in Shrivensham Parish at 11/- a week (common labourage). It was unanimously agreed, (myself being the only ***) that henceforth the wages of the men should be only 10/- a week till Lady day. I have always held Charity to be a principle of the heart which instinctively is consistent with itself, not even requiring the powers of reason to guide us from committing oppression and wrong. In the early part of this meeting, while it was your Lordship's property that was in question, Joseph Hughes made fine speeches about charity etc and said he would always be the poor's friend, and Mr John Fairthorne the overseer of Mr Berens appointment said Mr Hughes had always filled his place well as acting overseer, and he hoped he would always have

the "sake if the poor here"(this was the expression). When it is your Lordship's property which is to be lavished with an unsparing hand by favouritism on sycophants, parasites and cringing flatterers, then over love to the poor carries us to an animated zeal in their behalf. But the moment our own interests become concerned, this compassionate Vestry possess an *** oppressive and unjust act against the industrious, faithful skilful portion of the poor labourers, striping them of the reward of their witness and levelling them down to the standard of the most idle, most faithless and most ignorant labourers in the whole village. One can hardly imagine we are living in the 19th century, in the first commercial country in the world, and within twenty miles of its great seat of learning and within ten hours ride of its metropolis. But the secret of this gross absurdity lies here. It is the failing of the good man at this place to be too fond of the homage and flattery of the lowest class of the community. It is the most unworthy part of this community who carry their deportment beyond the reverential expressions of all respect.

It is a thing greatly to be lamented that the chief family now residing at Shrivenham do not discern between that respect which is sincere and valuable, and that inflated expression of respect which seeketh only its own objects. There is not a person in the Parish who is not sensible of this good man's infirmity, and who does not talk of it, but then the Farmers humour this disposition as it respects the increase of the Poor Rates, because their selfish capacity is indulged on the other hand by a permission and countenance on the part of Mr Berens to reduce the price of wages in the manner I have described. In conversations I have had with Mr Berens on the injustices of this practise of the farmers, he has always concurred with me in opinion. Why then does he not oppose it? It is not for want of light on the subject - certainly not. But there is a tacit acquiescence on each side to the other, for the attainment of their respective gratifications. And it is in this disjointed and dislocated state of our Poor's management that your Lordship's Estate is ground to ponder. There is not a farmer in this Parish but has some to know that the less poor rates his farm is subject to, the more his landlord may fairly require for rent. At least if any of them are ignorant of this at present, I am certain they will soon be put up to it by those who countenance the present order of things. Every thing that is done in the way of charity at this place seems to me to be done solely and exclusively at your Lordship's expense. Are the poor to be educated? Your Lordship is to educate them. Are the poor to be clothed? Your Lordship is to clothe them. Are Sunday Schools to be

established? Your Lordship is to have the exclusive privilege to pay for them. Is fuel to be distributed cheap? Your Lordship is to pay the difference. Are provisions to be sold cheap? Your Lordship is to make up the seller's profit. Do labourers want work? My Lord Barrington is expected to supply it. Are the poor to be fed to the full? My Lord Barrington is to feed them to the full through a profusion of Poor Rates. Where our cottages are so full, so fed, and are ready to hive, my Lord Barrington is expected to build houses for the reception of this new colony. But if my Lord build, he must also endow. That he must to a certainty. It must be my Lord Barrington's fields that must maintain these new cottages stocked with this new Population. It must be my Lord Barrington's vineyards and olive yards that must go to the strengthening and flattering of this new race; and under this increased evil, one more having will well nigh go to strip my Lord's family of their hereditary estate.

My Lord I have stated nothing but what is true, and I believe my deductions from the facts are no more than consonant with sound reason. Not in any degree inflated. All private pecuniary charity in this place, is exclusively your Lordships under one or other of these shapes I have particularised. If anything could be wanting to convince your Lordship of this, a letter which I received from Mr Berens the beginning of last June and which I inclose will be conclusive. The occasion of this letter was as follows. I signified to Mr Berens that your Lordship 's £500 agreed to be laid out on Lady Effingham's House was expended. He desired me to continue paying the men. I took an account of their time, made up the weekly wage bill on Saturday afternoon and sent it inclosed in an envelope to Mr Berens, accompanied by a book containing the particulars of the disbursement of the £500. The persons named in Mr Berens' letter, viz; Skinner, Thomas and Moses Jefferies, Harpwood and Stephen Warren, stood in this wage bill at 10/- a week. This was the week preceding hay harvest, and at a time when not an effective labourer in the Parish received less than from 10/- to 12/- a week. Mr Berens was at this time in great want of labour to clean up the rubbish and level the ground about the house, a service he was very anxious to have performed against a visit which Lady Effingham was expected to make (and which she did make) the beginning of July. On the Monday morning of that week, I took particular pains to collect a number of labourers applicable for this work, as I assured Mr Berens if it was not done that and the following week no labourers would be to be had, as they would all be engaged in the hay harvest

and so it proved for all those men disappeared in a few days, the greater portion never going again after that very Saturday evening. Well my Lord, on the receipt of this letter, I attended the weekly wage account and having put these men at 9/- a week, I gave the total amount of the weeks wage to Thomas Haines, (Mr Berens' head man, and Mrs Hare's sole tenant) and also the wage account for him to pay these people. I thought it more proper that Mr Berens' work people should be paid by his own foreman than by my Lord Barrington's agent. It was either the same evening or on the following Monday that Haines returned me the wage paper and some few shillings which he said had spared of paying the wage, as Joseph Hughes had settled with some of these men on the Parish account. In explanation, this means, that to some little matter farther out of these men's wages, Joseph Hughes had received instructions to pay a part of these men as Parish labourers, (the Parish labourers receiving by an ordinance of the Vestry only 8/- a week). I desired Thomas Haines to take the money back to Mr Hughes as I did not understand it and my accounts were made up. Such a Millipede as Mr Statham (the gentleman who lived in your Lordship's house rent free, and then wrote to request your Lordship to repair the window he had broken) might be suitable for such a service. My nature cannot bend to it for I trust to be enobled when I die, and if I am, my dignity will endure for ever.

Your Lordship will perhaps perceive I write under some worth of spirit. Perhaps I do - having been moved to it by the philipie of Joseph Hughes, and the manner in which he spoke in heroics. His manner would have been different, if he had not felt himself as he thought, well supported. This is the second time that in that duty of my office as your Lordship's Steward if I have unexpectedly found myself opposed to this man. If Mr Berens had been present at this Vestry meeting and Mr Hughes speaking from himself, and to me in the way that he did I should have availed myself of so excellent an opportunity to have delivered my sentiments on the various points before us making my *** on Joseph Hughes alone, and I am sure I could have put the goodness my agreement in so strong a point of light, that his master must from mere shame have deserted him, and left him in the level of men like Mr Berens who have no family, adopt the public from a love of popularity. And this is well, but than to possess any merit it should be done at their own expense. I assure your Lordship that although I have poured my whole heart out to your Lordship, my sentiments of Mr Berens rest with myself and your

Lordship, and your Lordship's interest and my happiness require that in some measure it should be so. For although Mr Berens with a view to keep me in the back ground as much as possible, from the jealousy of a feeble and impatient mind, I have never heard that he has openly spoken disrespectfully of me. But this inconveniency has arisen from his conduct. It has given encouragement to his flatterers to calumniate and put bad construction on my measures and endeavour not only to render them unpopular but farther to raise a popularity against his perceived that this is not displeasing to Mr Berens. This circumstance has occasioned me more counteractions, and your Lordship's affairs more delay and expense than otherwise would have arisen. The payment and sacrifice to Giles was one instance of many. These evils however have not been without some counteracting advantages. They have made me more cautious in respect to what steps I took, and they have precipitated several persons on hostile measures, which in the result have proved favour able to your Lordship's interest, which ever must be the care while the land of this estate is to me to himself, and will not lend his authority to his own disparagement, and to pluck the feather from his own cap. Your Lordship I think, may rely both on my age and temperament, and experience, that Mr Berens is in no danger of finding any want of respect from me. As a man I view him more as a child than a rival. But his office both ecclesiastical and as a Magistrate will always gain him due deference from me. I am not quite certain I shall send this letter. I will keep it by me two or three days to cool on, but if I then think the weight of useful information in it (as it respects your Lordship's concerns), outbalance the imperfections, I will send it; throwing myself on your Lordship's indulgence for the rest.

I am my Lord etc George Merryweather.

P.S. Since writing this letter I have received your Lordship's of the 12th. Your Lordship will be in part informed concerning what you wish to be acquainted with. I will very soon make out the new rent roll. I am now in treaty for Haines late house. I shall get from £20 to £27 a year more for it, than it let for. I shall get £28 a year for Wilson's house. I have let the appendage to Miss Canfield's house at an advance of £1.15s a year. I hope in the course of a week or ten days to let the odds and ends which were lately part of Kings Farm. For the close, called, "Barns Barton" No 247, now £2.5s have had bid at £10 a year. I expect to let either the Barnicles or the Cherry Orchard, or both, at £5 an acre. I am glad

your Lordship thinks of taking Perring's farm into hand, it will add £300 a year to your Lordship's income. Forty has done great justice to his field this summer. Before I do make an enquiry concerning Perring's farm as to the ...*missing* ...I will get him and all the old tenants to come under a covenant ... *missing* ... mode of cultivation and manner of quitting in like manner as ... *missing* ... done with the new tenants. I believe Perring's is a Lady Day entry, Mr Davis said it was. The house rents have hitherto been paid yearly, but the last half year I proposed to have then paid twice a year. They have always been considered as becoming due at Michaelmas, but they are not generally paid at Michaelmas, [Rents] usually received by driblets from Michaelmas to the ensuing Lady day. Now that the house property has become more considerable, I propose the rents to be paid twice a year. Lime, Bricks and Timber are commonly paid for once a year in this neighbourhood. The Coppice wood which was sold last Spring became due this Michaelmas, but I have not yet received it. I shall receive it between this time and [tomorrow], such is the custom. As the ... *missing* ... coppice wood did not involve much property, and would ... *missing* ... many hands, I did not choose to string these up to a ... *missing* ... of payment, till greater objects were accomplished. It would have been adding so many more voices against me.

Letter No 62

Beckett 28th October 1818

My Lord

I received your Lordship's letter of the 13th a week after its date, and your Lordship's letter of the 20th, with the sample of creeping Wheat, came in hand on Tuesday, (the 27th yesterday). Herewith is Mr Crowdy's acknowledgement of the receipt of the £430, which with the £180 Mortgage pays for the land, and Mr Wrighton, your Lordship's tenant is in

possession. The reason why your Lordship is not yet in possession of the particulars of the amount which constitute the fine to be paid for the removal of the Stainswick Lease is this. Although I have hitherto had no personal acquaintance with Mr Oddie the Steward for Magdalen College, I know I stand on a good footing with him, and I have a visitation from him of more than a twelve months standing to go over to Oxford and see him. Dr Ellerton the chief tutor of that college is our mutual friend too, and I believe we are all three Yorkshire men, and from the same neighbourhood. Now it was my intention as soon as our Wheat was all safely sown and trenched to go over to Oxford, and pay my long protracted visit, and use the occasion to expostulate with Mr Oddie on the extraordinary use of the fee, and I think I could rely if any thing can be done by him it will be done. If by a letter I had gained the items which compose this charge, there might have been more difficulty in his receding from them, than in a mere conversation. In having formed this opinion I must however acknowledge I am quite unacquainted with the influence that Mr Oddie as Steward, possesses in such cases. Our Wheat sowing will be finished tomorrow, and I propose going to Oxford on Monday evening by the coach, and returning the following evening. The creeping Wheat is sown this morning in the middle of the field No 41 called "Ten Acres." But I reserve a detail of our farming operations for a letter on that express subject. I have much greater gratification in employing the little of what remains of the paper in stating to your Lordship, that I [presume] the reformation of our Poor Rates will be immediate, unalterable and permanent and without heart burnings and unkind feelings. Lady Effingham is a lovely, intelligent person, and much better acquainted with business than the family I found here, and I have reason to know and believe she views these subjects in the same point of view which I do, and her respect for my courage and fidelity in your Lordship's concern has been expressed in the warmest manner. This has turned the matter quite round, and I am sure is as fortunate circumstance for your Lordship's interest and my comfort. All the points of your Lordship's letters I will attend to.

This is the letter from William Crowdy to George Merryweather

Highworth, October 19, 1818

Dear Sir

I am obliged to you for your remittance of four hundred and thirty pounds which this morning's post duly brought to me.

There is a regular receipt for the money on the back of the conveyance of the Morgan land and I will deliver over the Deeds the first opportunity.

I am Dear Sir

Your faithful humble servant

William Crowdy.

(Merryweather continues) Mr Berens is from home, and will be for the next week.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 63

Beckett 2nd November 1818

My Lord

I wrote your Lordship the 15th ult. which letter I sent off the 18th or 19th of last month. I wrote your Lordship again on the 28th ult. (but hastily) intended being at Oxford tonight, but I think I shall be more [usefully] employed at home for a day or two. Wilson's house which was £24 a year, now let for £28. The field which stands in the map No 247, Rent

£25 to an excellent tenant at £10 a year. I am in treaty for Haines house the advance of rent will be from £20 to £30 a year. I have let the land which formerly belonged to it at £27 a year. The Cherry Orchard will accommodate the new-comer at £4.10s to £5 per acre, if he should chance ***. I hope to let the Barnicles at £5 per acre. I am in treaty for it. Mr Heath of Faringdon, a Brewer, the owner of the publick (sic) house at Longcott, is building a new publick house there, which is [estimation] of £400 to £600 cost. (Note: This is the King & Queen Pub). He has built the greater part of it near your Lordship's domain. I say nothing against that for he is an audacious man. The field called "Apple Tree Piece," No 249 1a.0r.16p annual rent £2.15 lies close to this new public house which he is building. To his new house he has not an inch of land or stabling. This field to him must be invaluable. If I have your Lordship's authority for so doing, I should like to sell Mr Heath this field. It is quite detached from all your Lordship's other land. Mr King's bad management has not left one inch of fence around it, and all the fence belongs to your Lordship. I dread to think of the expense of enclosing it. If your Lordship will empower me, I will sell this field ... *ink smudged* ... Yesterday I let the cottage occupied by Jonathan Green (over Carter) £4. There are *** competitors for it. I could have let it for £5 but I do not wish to avail myself of the necessities of the people in this instance. Green is our lead man next to Mr Airs, and he is constantly to be favoured to higher wages. I increased his wage by letting him into the cottage at Beckett house rent free. This is agreeable to the *** Mrs M who thinks we are too lonely since my son Horatio has left us. I think tomorrow or the day after I shall let Haine's house. Then I can make out the Rent Roll in alphabetical arrangement, and I shall be proud of it, but my Honoured Lord, I am not more proud that our Poor Rates are taking a right turn which I will soon show your Lordship is £600 of and *** of your Lordship's estate. So far from home as I am, and distant *** fields, I have dreaded a struggle with this good man Mr Berens but Almighty God has sent this excellent person Lady Effingham to this village just in right time to keep all in harmony, all in strength for although Mr Berens is very good, he is very obstinate. The age, and experience, and sense, and activity of Lady Effingham has done more for me in this respect than I could ever have done especially for myself. I think your Lordship is the most fortunate gentleman in the world all your Lordship's concerns prosper the happiest and most unlooked for incidents, over which no human *** or has any control. Lady Effingham tells me her house will cost £700 to £800. She can afford it, that is one comfort and another comfort is that Mr Berens little unremitted jealously has

accorded an unnecessary expense in which I am no way concerned. This Lady Effingham sees very well. My Lord, although I have in the way of ... ink smudged ... expressed myself freely to your Lordship of Mr Berens' ... *ink smudged* ... [character] I declare solemnly to your Lordship I have not done so to the public. To the public, I have always magnified him. If Mr Berens will only continue in the good way he is in respect to our Poor Rates, I will honour him more and more. I will not dishonour nor lessen him in my own defence, contrary ***. I will *** him in my conversation with the public.

My Lord, I do assure you, I never in my life wrote a letter wherein my heart so delated with gladness as it does on writing this letter. By the intervention of a mighty providence, I have so much accomplished with so little trouble, that I am almost surprised with the success of the immediate issue. I am not naturally or consistent orally, fearful, quite otherwise, but do know persons of quality and title do so run together in unison as a privileged order that I doubt whether I cannot be getting out of my element and incurring a resentment at the ... *missing* ... when I am thinking I am *** Masters ... *missing* ...

My honoured Lord, be assured, that in the management of your Lordship's concerns here, I am looking infinitely beyond any poor necessary motives. I am not forgetful or unmindful of the honour your Lordship did me by your visit to Benly, of your Lordship's invitation of me to Sedgfield, of your Lordship's advocation of my cause on that occasion to the Bishop of Durham, of your Lordship's remembrance of me in my very lowest at *** at Manchester, when I seemed to be forgotten of my father and my mother, and of all my great friends, and subsequently, when your Lordship gathered me up out of my lowest [ebb] and placed me here and magnified me by your countenance. My Lady Barrington also, by approving the little arrangements at the house in Shrivenham, and expressly her kind approbations of the improvements at the Farm House at Home Leaze (late Bennett's) have quite won my heart.

I know I am your Lordship's Steward and servant, but I am so pleased and gratified with the turn things have taken here for your Lordship's interest, that I will this letter though hastily *** officially as your Lordship's distant and more humble friend. My Lord, I am glad beyond what I can describe.

I am your Lordship's most obedient servant
George Merryweather

NB. Perring's is a Michaelmas entry.

Letter No 64

Beckett Thursday evening November 12th 1818

My Lord

Since I wrote your Lordship the 2nd inst. I have received your Lordship's letters of Oct 30th and the 9th inst. Mr Oddie has appointed me to meet him tomorrow at Oxford, and I have also an appointment with a gentleman at Oxford tomorrow to treaty for Haine's House, which I hope to let; if I do not let it, I will advertise it and I have prepared an advertisement to take with me. I have been very much engaged out doors since I wrote to your Lordship in winding up many matters that were in hand. I write tonight on such points as I can now speak, as I shall not return from Oxford till Saturday by noon day and the remainder of the day will be occupied sufficiently. The very first leisure day I have, I will devote to the Rent Roll. I will also from some sort of estimate as to the assistance which can be given from Beckett towards the Stainswick Fee. Your Lordship's letters lie before me and the first thing I have to speak to is the quantity of Provender (*fodder*) on hand for the Cattle etc. Exclusive of 3 tons of Hay which I sold to Rich grown in the Paddock No 94 last year and which was badly got, we are supposed by Mr Fidel to have 38 tons. There is about 28 acres of Barley Straw, but the quantity is only one third in bulks of the ordinary growth of other years. We have 11 acres of Turnips. I suppose they are the best in the neighbourhood. Turnips with us this year are supposed to be more leafy and less weighty in the bottom than usual. The 10 acres of Rape is as thick as the most luxuriant meadow in the month of June. Barley having come up at twice this year, a part of the first grown shed its seed, which occasions as uncommon quarterly herbage of

that kind. I cannot say we have much grass, yet the whole farm has the [greenness] of June. The Barley stubble was green as the pastures. If there had been no Rape sown, I am quite satisfied the Wheat crop now growing amongst it, would have been quite adequate to a full Wheat crop. I am sorry this rape was sown under this circumstance, as the field is literally filled with manure. It would have produced another good crop of Wheat without further expense of ploughing and seed. I have seen divers fields sown in this way this year, which are intended to remain, the land being in good heart. This Wheat herbage will however add to the value of the Rape herbage. But the beauty of over little farm in hand is the coming Wheat crop, if it please God to preserve it from blight, mildew etc. The field called Stallpit Piece and Claylands had been so saturated with wet which fell in the winter and the month of April and beginning of May, that we could not get out into these grounds till very late in consequence of the perforation indispensable for the Barley and Turnip crops. By the time the Barley and the Turnip grounds were finished, these two fields were baked as hard as the turnpike road. They have been subdued by dirt of main force, but they are subdued. Four acres however of the Claylands have bid defiance to all our efforts till the late rains. It is therefore not clean, but it is sown with Wheat too, and we must keep it clean with hoeing next Spring. On the field called "Ten Acres" late Giles we laid 173 stout cart loads of manure. Mr Gerring pronounced the farther side of the Claylands impracticable, and let it run to waste. With the exception of the four acres which I have named, this field is as finely *** revised as any field on the estate, and is like an onion bed. We have led out 560 cart loads of manure this season. 680 bushels of coal ashes and I think 14 tons of bones. In addition to this there were 400 cart loads of rich loam led out of the new fold yard to the Clay Lands, and 1500 bushels of Lime. There were also the ashes arising from pairing etc, burning 9 or 10 acres of this field. There were 2000 bushels of Lime led out to the field called Stallpit Piece. The wholesome state of these lands and the promising state of the crop corresponds with the effort which has been used to reclaim them and put them into order. The ground sown with Wheat is 44 acres. The ground to be sown in Spring with Barley will be 25 acres, and the ground to be sown with Turnips will be 29 acres. We shall have no bare fallows. The Turnip and Barley ground will be real Turnip and Barley soil, and easily cultivated. In my catalogue of feed I find I have forgot the field of Tares near the Lime Kiln. I do not understand Tares, but I am told it is a fair crop. William Airs thinks it is pinches for seed, but what it is deficient in this respect, is made up by a most abundant crop of Barley

which he came up along with the Tares. Perhaps three fifths of this field is sown with winter Tares, the residue remain till Spring for Spring Tares, but it is covered in with Barley. This is the case all over the county. I will be extremely glad to have the treatise on the making of compost manure. The Scotch Thyloes your Lordship mentions would be certain sale here. There is no beef of even a tolerable quality killed in the county. I durst engage for the well selling of them. They would be quite a treat. We could use one a week at Shrivenham, one at Highworth, one at Faringdon, one at Swindon and one at Wantage. But I have not the least skill in buying them, and herein I should be very diffident. If I could have all the cattle purchased in the North under your Lordship's skill and judgement that way, I would readily in due time engage with a farm of a thousand acres as a hundred, if it were found to inform your Lordship interests. The weighing machine your Lordship mentioned would be a most valuable acquisition, and would give me more confidence in myself, in what I am obliged in truth to profess myself entirely ignorant. The following statement I am assured from a very intelligent person the value of Cattle Stock in this part of Berkshire at this time. The same person tells me that according to your Lordship's account of the Newcastle Fair your stock is laid in lower there than here. If this be uniformly the case it augers great things for this estate under proper management. The price of 15/- per head to the salesman, (be the cattle great or small) admits of an easy modification. There are always two parties to the making of a bargain, and I know no law like that of the Meder and Persians to bend down a grazier and a cattle salesman to one unalterable piece of ... *missing* ...

The value of Stock in Berkshire Nov 1818, viz, Barren Cows are selling from 4 to 4½ (pence per pound?). When these cows are fat, they are 7 per lb. Oxen are laid in at 5 to 5½ per lb, when fat they are sold for 7½ per lb. NB. Oxen are generally bought in Herefordshire and in Wales. The Herefords are in most estimation, and they are generally laid in at a higher price than Welsh cattle. The Cow Stock is generally procured from the Dairy Farms, namely such cows as prove to be barren. In calf, Heifers generally sell well in the Spring. Those most esteemed are the short horned Yorkshire breed. The bones of these cannot be too small. There is always a market in London for the sale of Cow and Ox Beef produced in this neighbourhood. The London Salesmen take the fat beasts at a variety of depots in this neighbourhood and drive them to London for which they charge 15/- per head, whatever be the size if the beast. The South Down Sheep are considered

the best either for breeding or feeding. Great numbers are kept in this neighbourhood. Whether mutton now sells at 8½ per pound.

I rejoice my Lord at the success of your son, but I am unacquainted of what nature it consists. In conformity with your Lordship's injection I name Mrs M. I am much obliged to your Lordship and I am happy to say she is doing very well. The Surgeons say they never knew so bad a case so favourably appearing, but she will be confined twelve months.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

On address leaf

If the North breed of Cattle are to be as mighty and in as good condition as the breed with us in Berkshire is to be done at six years old, the North breed being only three years older. I think your Lordship said was the McCole ? were the cases, and if all their cattle could be bought by your Lordship in the North and sent to be fattened off in these pastures, it might be probably answer a good purpose.

Letter No 65

Beckett 17th November 1818

My Lord

The Steward of Magdalen College says the fine for the seven years renewal of the lease of Stainswick is less than it was the last time the lease was renewed, and that there is a mistake in the apprehension that it was only £700 which was paid heretofore. He says his Oath of Office does not allow him to divulge the particulars of the surveyor's valuations. These disclosures he adds would subject them to endless inconveniences, but he says that

on a supposition the surveyor may be correct in his judgement of the value of the College Estates, there is the one rule established on his valuation, for the regulation of fines which is made common to all their tenants. To convince me he showed me his tables if calculating for their general use. In all cases of fines upon estates granted out for 20 years, renewable every 7 years, the College takes one year and ten months after deducting the amount of the annual cash rent, two thirds of the old rent, and a portion of the fees. He says that they have considerably reduced the 7 years fine (as it would be found to stand by their calculation, on their surveyors most recent valuation of the College Estates) and they have reduced what would be the amount of the 7 years fine, for the purpose of increasing the annual payment to the College.

By the 31st December the time this fine has to be paid, I can muster £500 or £600 from Beckett, but this will include what I shall have to pay for the annual fee. The annual fee is independent of the 7 years fine. The items of this account are as follows:-

Stainswick Corn Rent	£161.16.6	Late Ackerman's	£10.18.1
Old Rent	17.6.8		
Acquittance	0.10.0		0.1.0
Entertainment	0.10.0		
Sheep	16.0.0		
Quit Rent	<u>5.4.3</u>		
	201.7.5		10.19.1

I have let Haines house for £40 a year the land for £27. In six months time I shall get £45 to £50 for the house. I have not time to explain. Tonight I shall let half the Cherry Orchard No 27 - 6a. 1r. 4p. at £5 per acre. I have got the same price for the other half. I am now at work with the Rent Roll. I will soon finish it. I hope your Lordship will soon send the Scotch Beasts, and please my Lord to send more of them, and if I have an invoice or Bill of parcels with them, I shall know what I am about. The Post man is waiting, and this may make me omit some points to which I should otherwise wish to speak. I have been taken off all this forenoon unexpectedly, and I had set it apart for writing your Lordship. I just wish to add that I will increase your Lordship's rent £500 to £600 a year, by the

better management of our Poor. I coolly and deliberately pledge myself to accomplish this in two years, but then your Lordship must stand by me and not forsake me, if I have reason and argument on my side. If I may purchase be occasionally opposed to the higher powers, but in such cases I will reduce it to correspondence as much as possible, and as little to Vestry work. If I have reason on my side, and the self conviction of my opponents, I will not waste time in untying the Gordian knot. I will accomplish my business and leave them to accomplish theirs at leisure. If man will not act on conviction they are incorrigible and must be left to their measures, but I do not know this the case. I am begging the question.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 66

Beckett 28th November 1818

My Lord

It is nearly midnight on Saturday, but I just write to say that the new Rent Roll is made out as it stands at this day, and a fair copy of it is transcribed for your Lordship, which will be sent off on Tuesday to Durham. I wish to keep it on Monday to call it over and to see if there be any mistakes in copying. I wrote to your Lordship the 17th or 18th since which time I have received no letter from the North. I have only this observation to make on the present rental, that there is not a single farm or house too high let; I have proof of this. Mr Coles has offered to enter into an agreement to lay out £600 on his farm if he may have a lease at his present rent, and every new tenant who has come into the estate would be glad to have a long lease. I anticipate with pleasure still farther increase of income to your Lordship at Beckett, the objects of which I will point out. Four of the farms are much underlet, but the precise period or periods of advancing them cannot just now be fixed. As to the Corn Rates, the administration of them is weak and churlish beyond any thing one can conceive. William Johnson who is not an old man tells me he

can very well remember when they were only £70 to £80 a year. This I apprehend cannot be more than thirty years since. And it is on fact, that at this day there is employment enough for all the new in the Parish, if the farmers would only be true to their own interests. Indeed I do not know of any man out of employment at this time. Our weekly payments have however got up to £12. This is the effect of favouritism and nothing else. But I know how to stop it. Whatever is saved in the wastefulness of our Parish Rate, resolve itself into rent to the land owner, as I propose to recover £500 a year to your Lordship from this extravagant fund of waste. I feel very anxious to be justified in your Lordship's mind in the execution of this matter. Believe me my Lord, your Lordship's property has in every way been shamefully trespassed upon to gain popularity. When I took upon me to subscribe £5 to Skinner refused £60 a year and Giles, Mr Berens knew very well that Skinner had refused £60 a year very lately for his services as a labourer at our Lime Kiln. Skinner has three harvests in the year. Hay Harvest, Corn Harvest and a harvest in

	Land	Revenues	Gardens	Reverend	Gravel	Sand	Total Rent
	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d
Rent Roll of Becket at Lady Day 1815	59 7 8	55 12 0	2 7 6	19 7 0	31 18 8	17 5 10	6105 19 37 1/2
Increase of Rent	11 1 15 2 1/2	3 17 8 6	38 5 8	4 10 0	0 17 11	1 7 8	1525 8 7 1/2
Rent Roll at Michaelmas 1815	71 2 3 8	403 0 6	40 12 2	17 17 0	32 16 7	15 18 2	7631 8 1
Said Rents arising from recent Purchases	335 17 0						
Recess Rents	114 17 0						
	350 12 0						
Increase of Rent exclusive of new Purchases	117 1 14 7 1/2						
	1525 8 7 1/2						
At a proper season, the following Farms of freehold and of an additional Part of the same statement are							
Bowles	100						
Southwold	65						
Brick	80						
Perry	105						
Perry on by agreement	10						
Value of the Longest £20 to £50 and 20	25	385					
Rectification of the Parish Rates		500					
Some, even if it were not become an article of agricultural use, but which I believe it will do		105					
Profit by Farms in Head of Perry but taken in addition		535 5 1/2					
		1525 8 7 1/2					
To which add the present income of Rent		117 1 14 7 1/2					
		2700 0 0					

N.B. This is a statement with respect to the present state of the parish, and not to the state of the parish at any other time, as the profits can be estimated, with the least difficulty.

Winter by weighing Hay at 2/- a ton. He can weigh three tons a day with a man to assist him at 1/6 a day. The subscriptions replaced all their old furniture and clothes with new furniture and clothes. Mr Berens knew all this when he wrote to your Lordship, and

Skinner who is a greedy, selfish man had lived years in one of your Lordship's houses rent free. Mr Berens should have been ingenuous enough not to have dealt so by your Lordship in this instance. Daniel Powell is worth £300 to £500 and has an excellent trade on the Canal in Corn and Coals, yet your Lordship clothes and educates one of his children at 50/- a year expense. And there is a more preposterous instance than this, in the abuse of the same charity. But all this is nothing to the wilfulness and folly of the management of the Poor Rates. But I drop the subject. We are now engaged in drawing in the timber which was left scattered about the farms. The quantity and value of what now remains I really cannot say till it be collected together in the timber yard. It is chiefly rough in quality, being Pollards, and course trees, whose growth had been stopped by excessive shranding to the very tops of the trees. I judge there will be enough of it to put all the farm houses and the estate into good order, but it is not a quality to make an advantageous sale. I propose to sell the timber which was chiefly found on the land purchased of Wirdnam as it is much pollarded and also copped, Your Lordship will recollect telling me to take down those trees and some which grew at Stallpits. These with a very few more that are better down than standing will be sold as they stand. The annual fall of Coppice wood should always be sold in Winter rather than Spring. It will bring more price by £30 or £40 per cwt as I am told, by good judges. All is going well.

I am my Lord etc.... George Merryweather.

NB. Our tenants have as I anticipated, been put up to the point, that a diminution of Parish Rates will ultimately make no difference to them. One of them told me last week, that it was current in the Parish that I would add in rent what was saved in Rates. I have no objections to this my Lord. It will help me well over the difficulty. They do all admit the absurdity of the Rates and if they object to move in a rectification of them because it will be only the Landlord's interest, cannot I my Lord turn round upon them with a very good grace, and say, "gentlemen, as you have no proper regard for any interest but your own, instead of fighting your battles at the Vestry in which I have no personal interest, I will leave you to regulate your Parish concerns your own way, you have put new thoughts into my head. I will make it your interest to look after your own concerns, and I will confine myself to mine. I will immediately go for so much additional rent on our old tenants as the difference between good management, and the present wasteful

management would save in their poor rates. As you do not consider nor take into any account my Lord's interest, I will do that for you. To the new tenants I will allow a stated time, say two years for this reformation. I am willing to bear a hand and take my fair proposition of trouble to the effecting the whole load of attendance and trouble on my own shoulders. You have taught me better." This or something like this is the argument I will use as being called for by the occasion.

Letter No 67

Beckett 10th December 1818

My Lord

In a few days I shall have completed the £500 which I will remit to your Lordship's Bankers. The annual rent of the Stainswick Collage land is as follows, viz:-

In the possession of Richard Coles		£644.10.1
Ditto	Henry Lewis	61.5.0
Ditto	Isaac Giles (part of No 67 - Harestone Field	37.16.0
Ditto	Thomas Plummer (part of No 67)	22.7.0
	Coppice in Wood	<u>70.0.0</u>
		£835.18.6

I named your Lordship in my last that I proposed selling a small lot of timber which with the exception of a very few trees, were scumbled trees, and pollards. Your Lordship will farm a pretty correct den of this timber from the valuation made by Mr Fidel. Of the trees on the land bought last year of Wirdnam, the number of trees on that 36 acres of ground was 492 and the value £245.9.6. We have sold 270 of the trees by auction for £259 which

leaves 222 of the best, and the only ones capable of improvement. The Coppice wood used to be sold for 2/9 a pole, your Lordship being at the expense of it. It now sells for various prices from 4/- to 6/9 per pole. The timber and the annual cutting coppice wood are sold for £550 to be paid for at midsummer, and the payment guaranteed by the Auctioneer. The timber is about £400 and the coppice wood is about £150, and the *** purchase are at the expense of cutting it down. I am glad your Lordship forwarded so many cattle. I will make much of the person your Lordship has sent with them, and I am persuaded I shall get much information from him. All is going on well. Thomas Wilson would neither pay rent for his house nor quit it. I offered him another house (one of the best cottages) to go into rent free, but he would not stir. In consequence I proceeded again and he has since twice attempted to shoot me, once in the living room of my house, and once in the street of the village. He is now at Reading Jail. Every person approves my conduct to him, and view with abhorrence his attempts on my life. I propose to write again in the course of a few days. I file the Farmer's Journal. I look with impatience for the Cattle and more especially for the drove. I am glad to tell your Lordship that Lady Effingham is very condescending in her attention to my family, generally being with Mrs M and my daughter three or four times a week, and sometimes as much as an hour or two at a time. The same thing arises now on the part of Mrs Berens and the Miss Courtenay so that I hope to find strength to carry all my measures without a respect to with Mr B.

I am my Lord etc ... George Merryweather

Letter No 68

Beckett 13th December 1818

My Lord

I have received your Lordship's letters of the 7th and the 10th inst. as well as Mr Woodroff's franked. There must be great irregularity in the Post office either at Durham, Sedgefield or on the road. I lately had a letter from your Lordship which had been a week or eight days on the posting. I received your Lordship's letter of the 7th after I had written mine of the 10th, and I have been extremely uneasy at the miscarriage of the accounts ***. I received your Lordship's letter of the 10th this day. My letter to your Lordship of the 10th will have anticipated yours of the 7th and in some degree that of the 10th. If your Lordship can without any essential inconvenience pay the College fee immediately it may be well, but your Lordship may be assured of £500 from hence. I have good part of the money by me, and I should soon have the residue. Mr Woodroffe is a very mean spirited man. I have seldom met with a person more made up of tricks, and of that which is more disposed to be crooked and indirect. In consequence of all his round about movements, I confess I never had a heartier disposition to make an advantageous purchase than in his instance, for he has endeavoured to deceive your Lordship every way. He gave in on false statement of the annual outgoings of his farm, and practised divers other unmanly artifices. I wish he may have to deal with me at last.

Mr Weldon arrived with the Cattle on Friday noon all well. If these Cattle were fat, I judge they would in this neighbourhood be bought up like ripe cherries. I believe the field is full of people today looking at them. Mr Weldon says we have more feed than we want. He says we have 80 tons of Hay. It is very strange that Mr Fidel and Mr Airs should have estimated it 40 tons. For my own part I have no judgement in the matter. Perhaps the truth lies between these two estimates. Mr Weldon says our Turnips are the

best he has seen within a hundred miles of us. He also greatly approves of the Wheat, and the Rape. He thinks he has seen no Wheat any where that exceeds ours. He says we have more feed than he expected to find. He thinks the land at Beckett is the best he has met with since he left about six miles on this side of Northallerton. Chapplewick Farm (if bought) added to Ruffinwick. Mr Weldon is 100 or 150 acres of Killard's Farm, and the residue of Killard's farm added to Bowles, and Perrings take into hand, might probably being about as natural a movement as could be devised for the proper interests and emancipation of this estate in respect to rents. Your Lordship can better than I can estimate the value of Mr Weldon's judgement in valuing land; but Killard's farm strikes him to be a valuable land as he ever saw.

I am extremely happy the statement of the Rent Roll pleases. In addition to the Rent of the College rent which I transmitted your Lordship of £835.18.0
Is to be added the field in hand called Lower Claylands No 33 £26.7.7 and £13.3.10 is a total of £875.9.11

The Post Man waits

I am my Lord etc George Merryweather

Mr Weldon will set out about Tuesday

There is one more letter, contained within the file at the Berkshire County Archive, Ref No D/EZ155/1 Folios 1 - 66. It's from George Merryweather to the new Steward of the Beckett Estate, Robert Dawson.

Although the letter does not bear his name, his hand writing is very distinctive and the content confirms that it is certainly him. The content also strongly suggests that the recipient is Robert Dawson, the new Steward, who would have commenced his new employment at Lady Day 1821 (25th March). This file of folios 1 - 66 are a collection of bills collected by George Merryweather from James Fidel who was a Factor/Agent from

Faringdon who could be described as a, '*Jack-of-all-Trades.*' He carried out a lot work for the Barrington Estate. But Robert Dawson had a financial problem with those dealings and must have asked George Merryweather for help. This whole file was sent by Merryweather to Dawson along with the following covering letter.

Letter No 69

Abingdon 19th April 1821

Dear Sir

I hope you have arrived safe from your journey to Wales. I Have great pleasure in returning you thanks for your hospitality to me during my late visit to Beckett, which hospitality was continued to me after you left Shrivenham, by your friend Dr Beaty to whom please to make my kind remembrance.

I have examined all Mr James Fidel's accounts against Lord Barrington from the commencement of my agency to the termination of it. By the account which I delivered to you I made Mr Fidel's debts to my Lord 51.12.10^¼ This amount however was subject to the payment of £2.13.11 which he was desired to pay to his brother, which seems he did not pay and which you yourself have since paid to his brother. Mr Berens receives the Tithe of the Coppice Wood of Stainswick. I changed Mr Fidel's account £5.14.4^¾ less than the Net Proceeds of the last Coppice Wood he sold by auction at Stainswick, desiring him (Mr Fidel) to pay this Tithe of £5.14.4^¾ to Mr Berens. Mr Fidel declined paying this Tithe to Mr Berens and you have since that time paid it to Mr Berens yourself. The account will then stand as follows, viz;

Mr James Fidel's debt to Lord Barrington as account formerly delivered to Mr Davis
£51.12.10^¼

To which ass Tithe of Coppice Wood at Stainswick which Mr Fidel had received and accounted for £5.14.4^¾

From which deduct twenty pounds paid by Mr Fidel in 1815 or 1816 for William Johnson of Gallyherns to John Bowles of Longcott and which has been omitted £57.7.3 less £20 = £37.7.3

Mr Fidel in his letter to you of December 13th says he wants about £70 of Lord Barrington. This demand constitutes a difference of £107.7.3. A considerable portion of this difference was destroyed by a production of the vouchers for the payment of it, when Mr John Fidel came over to Shrivenham to examine the accounts with me, and to which you were evidence. There is a claim for £1.5.8 made by Mr Fidel for Poultry bought by Mr Fidel for Lord Barrington. I never had a note of this, but Mr Fidel can furnish you with one, when, I dare say, you will admit the claim. I have a recollection of the transaction, but not a perfect one. There are three other sums which Mr Fidel wishes to have allowed to him, viz; a deduction which I made from his charge for drawing Timber off the farms to the Timber Yard, Aug 17th 1816. This deduction was £7, the charge was £79.10 £7.6.0

I will speak of these three sums severally. Mr Fidel's vouchers are now arranged in one packet. They are regularly numbered according to their date from No 1 to No 10. No 2, Aug 17th 1816 is Mr Fidel's Bill for drawing Timber, viz; £79.10. From this amount I deducted £7.10 and Mr Fidel had abundant justice done him in the residue. He signed the Bill but, he since denies he allowed the abatement. I am sorry for it. The sum of £5.17.0 as an addition to the prima of a draft horse arises thus. In October 1816, Mr Fidel was desired to procure 4 draft horses. Draft horses were at that time uncommonly low, and Mr Fidel said four very good ones could be bought for sixty pounds. He shortly sent four horses over to Beckett and by the voucher No 3 you will perceive they were charged £60. But one of these horses was more of a Galloway than a horse (*Type of Cow*) being vastly under size. The size in conjunction with the price were objected to, and an efficient draft horse was required in lieu of it. Much delay took place before this horse was replaced with an effective horse and then an additional charge of £5.17 is made. I objected to this additional charge at the time it was made and never could bring my mind to allow it. In the purchase of these horses, I held Mr Fidel to be acting for Lord Barrington, but I conceived the extra charge indicated that he was quite as alive to Mr Hyatt's interests as to Lord Barrington's. It was a considerable time before Hyatt could be brought to send an effective horse, for this small horse. In the mean while horses more somewhat in price, but nothing comparable to the extra charge made in the price of this horse. In the parcel

No 3 you will a letter from Hyatt the horse dealer date Nov 24th 1816, saying he would bring a horse to match the others, so that it is clear from Hyatt's own apprehension that the horse objected to, did not match the other horses. As the agent of Lord Barrington's Steward, Mr Fidel should have cast the disadvantage arising from the alteration of *** on Mr Hyatt not on Lord Barrington. Nor did Fidel consult me in this case, for if he did, I would have immediately objected to it. On a supposition that Mr Fidel had really paid Hyatt this £5.17 I said to his brother, when we overlooked the accounts at your house, it was my intention to allow the amount as a parting man from the neighbourhood, but in overlooking my papers, I have since found a letter from Mr Fidel dated Oct 22nd 1816 saying the 4 horses were bought for £60, and that if the small horse were objected to, he would be exchanged. Why had Hyatt this presentment that this horse would be required to be exchanged, but that he was conscious he ought to be exchanged? Mr Fidel being aware of this, as he already was by this same letter, why did he allow such an extraordinary exchange? My intention to recommend this allowance on the part of my Lord stands [cancelled] by Mr Fidel's own letter. I have not put the £5.17 to account. Hyatt's letter and Mr Fidel's letter are in No 3. Number 3 contains also Mr Fidel's receipt for the payment of the horses by me to him. The last item of this disputed account which I have to speak to is £12.5 allowed to me by Mr Fidel for Lord Barrington on the part of Wirdnam. By referring to the great book which contains the annual record of the Beckett accounts at Page 55 under the head of 'Great Tithe,' Wirdnam is owing an arrear of £12.5 at Michaelmas 1815. If you pass on to page 107 under the title of 'Great Tithe,' Michaelmas 1816 you will find Joseph Wirdnam's arrear of £12.5 paid and accounted for to my Lord Barrington. It is not usual for a Steward to make himself debtor to his Lord for sums he never received - I have however some times done so. But these doings are an exception to a general rule and ought always to be an exception. This instance of Mr Fidel's however, I am glad to say is not one of those exceptions of my delicacy to a general rule. The occasion did not call for any deviation from the ordinary practice of business. Joseph Wirdnam had died leaving Mr Fidel one of the Trustees to his Will. Shortly after I came to Beckett there was a fall of Timber on Wirdnam's land, of which Mr Fidel not only as a Trustee, but in the line of his profession, had the management. Mr Fidel having become identified through my [connection] with the interests of Lord Barrington, agreed to pay me the amount of the late Joseph Wirdnam's tithes. When he gave this permission, inside his (Mr Fidel's) account debtor for the £12.5 and I gave my

Lord credit for it in his Rental of Great Tithe as at page 107 in the Great Book at Beckett. In page 179 in the Great Book, under the head of 'New Purchases' will see entered 1817 Sept 11th, expense at Oxford all right with Mr Ward to meet Mr George Benly to pay for Wirdnam's Land, including *** £3.4.10. In *** this last circumstance merely as ascertaining the time of payment for Wirdnam's land, which land subsequent to this area of £12.5 was sold to Lord Barrington. If I had not been assured that Mr Fidel had already allowed me £12.5. in his account would I not have stopped the amount out of the purchase money then paid at Oxford? certainly I would. But Mr Fidel has since said to me he never allowed this £12.5 for Tithe to go to his account with Lord Barrington in as much as he never received it of Wirdnams. I am sorry to be at issue with Mr Fidel or with anyone whatever and to be obliged positively to say yes, when they positively say no! The matter probably of the following explanation but at all events my Lord Barrington has nothing to do with it. Mr Ward the Solicitor of Faringdon, who was Law Agent to Wirdnam's widow, and who was the receiver of monies for her, was formerly in partnership with the two Mr Fidels in a Bank at Faringdon. A separation of partnership took place a little before the time Wirdnam's land became an object of my attention and after the payment for the land, Mr Fidel and Mr Ward has a final adjustment of their long protracted accounts which ran through many years. If Mr James Fidel owed Mr Ward a balance on the adjustment of their long account, as he had told me was the case, it was not likely that Mr Ward would pay Mr Fidel the £12.5 out of the sale of Timber or out of the money he received of my Lord Barrington for the land. Certainly not. He would as a matter of course pay himself out of Wirdnam's money and allow Mr James Fidel credit with himself in account for the like amount thus diminishing Mr Fidel's balance and refunding himself out of Wirdnam's property which was in his hands. When I now give the transaction full and due consideration, I cannot in any point of view whatever recommend to my Lord the repayment if this sum of £12.5. If the transaction be so I conjecture between Mr Fidel and Mr Ward, were my Lord now to repay it, Mr Fidel would be twice paid. He would be paid by my Lord and he would be paid by Mr Ward, who in account will have given him credit for the like sum. But supposing no such account to subsist between Mr Fidel and Mr Ward as this payment of £12.5 then I am constrained to think that Mr Fidel does not mete out to all equally alike that he has one measure of the debtor and another for the creditor. Why on the part if one person so ardently alive to his own interest, such a strange obtuseness to Mr Ward his creditor and such a shining acuteness towards one his

debtor? I am not accustomed to be ridged in my sentiments of *** whom I have wished to think habitually will of. I am not desirous to impute anything to Mr Fidel but infinity of memory or judgement of procedure to which all men in some shape or other are liable. But when Mr Fidel and I are at perfect issue with each other on matters of fact, I am called on in self justification to make good the ground on which I have proceeded in this difference of account between us. When it is recollected by you with what assured confidence Mr John Fidel asserts there *** Grate had never been charged to account, and other articles amounting to £40 inclusive of the Grate, and that he had no doubt, but that it would be found so, it should abate somewhat of that positiveness which has been exercised from that *** in the instance of these various charges. But to put the question of dispute out of all doubt, he has charged me in my private account the £5.17 for the horse and the £7 abated in the charge for drawing wood, neither of which sums I ever allowed to this moment. His charging them to me is a full admission I never allowed them to pass to my Lord Barrington's account. That is all that concerns my Lord in this case. I just have to observe, that in some part of the Great Book which you hold, there is a variation of two pages in the number of the Folio from the duplicate which I hold, so that in making reference, you will sometimes have to look forward or to turn back two pages. I make no apology for the length of this letter, as nothing calls for greater explicitness and more minute detail than the explanation of a difference in money accounts, when the parties stand in the relative situation of Lord and Steward. I think I have been interrupted an hundred times by the children, but I hope I have made myself intelligible. Mr Fidel's vouchers and some other papers will be sent by the Coach tomorrow.

You who possess positive testimony how frequently and how sincerely I have recommended you to view Mr James Fidel as a most useful person in many instances to promote my Lord Barrington's interests, cannot be assured of the purity of my motives in the statement I have made between the parties in these accounts, namely my Lord Barrington and Mr Fidel. I will send Mr Fidel's vouchers and some other papers which be of use to you, by the Coach tomorrow. I have a letter from London by this morning's post calling me to London directly. The gentleman says I must not lose a day. A situation presents itself which in the management of it is quite in my way of ordering, and the possession of it will be quite compatible with the other thing I am in expectation of. It is supposed by my connections in London that I have influence to obtain the thing that now

presents itself, but I am assured not a day must be lost. My son has made the necessary application, but I must be quick or I miss it. I have not a syllable from Mr Taggatt my Brother. This silence is a flat negative to any assistance I might expect from him. I have nothing which I can turn into money. My watch is in pawn for a Pound Note, my top coat is in pawn for another Pound Note. We have only seven shillings left. There is a chance of our being set at liberty by the box which my son Frederick sent me from India, but that, if it should prove fortunate will be the work of some little time. This box, or rather the contents of it, were very miserably represented by the stuff Mrs Merryweather sent me to Shrevenham, and which I shewed to you ...

Rest of the letter is missing ...

George Merryweather - The Conclusion

George Merrrweather was born in 1769 in Yarm, Stockton-on-Tees. He married Mary Whittaker on 11th May 1793 at Bromley, Yorkshire and their first child, also George, was born the following April.

The first documentary evidence of his business activities comes from the history of Greenholme Mills published online by Burley Community Library, where it states that, '*Greenholme Old Mill, the weir and the first goit was built by a group of four partners, George Merryweather, Jonas Whittaker, Richard Paley and Thomas Davison circa 1790.*' There is further information when one of the reasons for building the Mill is suggested that, '*One of the partners, George Merryweather was renting Burley Hall. He'd married Mary Whittaker (sister of Jonas Whittaker) in 1793 and they were there when all the lands etc of Burley Manor was put up for sale in 1795.*' They appeared to have run the mills successfully spinning cotton for a while but by 1805 something had happened that caused the partners to split up. There is an announcement in the London Gazette, dated 27th Feb 1805, whereby George Merryweather effectively left the partnership, leaving Jonas Whittaker to run the

business on his own. By around 1810 Merryweather had moved to a mill in Manchester and took part of the workforce of Greenholme Mill with him.

A Notice in the Manchester Mercury dated Tues 26th Feb 1811, provides the information that the Manchester business did not go well. The Notice announces a Sale by Auction, *'on the premises, a factory situate in Pitt Street and Union Street, Ancoats Lane, late in the occupation of Mr Merryweather.'* It also lists the items that will be offered for sale, *'comprising about 150 Looms, 40 Warping Mills, Skips, Bobbins, Reeds, Geers, Winding Machine ...'* etc. The same newspaper on Tues 5th March 1811 gives the information that George Merryweather, a Manufacturer, Dealer and Chapman, had been declared bankrupt.

What happened to him immediately next is not clear, but the letters contained within the Barrington Collection at the British Library, London, confirm that in late 1814, he is located at Tavistock Street, London. In the file reference number ADD MS 73758, a letter from Lord George Viscount Barrington (5th), dated 11th December in the opening line states, *"I am sorry to find by my friend Mr Hollingsworth that you have not got out of your difficulties and I also learn from him that you are not indisposed to undertake the office of Steward to any Gentleman's landed property."* It is clearly the break that George Merryweather has been looking for when in his reply to Lord Barrington he writes, *"My Lord. I have read your letter over and over again, scarcely exciting my senses, for surely nothing but the most astonishing working of providence and the goodness of your Lordship could have proposed in my behalf, an employment so congenial and delightful to my mind."*

From this point begins the part of his life that is covered by the Shrivenham Heritage Society publication, *'The Letters of George Merryweather 1815 - 1818.'* But at the end of his time as the Steward of the Beckett Estate, the information becomes obscure again. Within the file at the Berks County Archive, Ref No D/EZ155/1 Folios 1 - 66, there is a letter written by George Merryweather from Abingdon dated 19th April 1821, to the new Steward, Robert Dawson. After addressing the matters of the estate he ends the letter rather mysteriously with, *"I have nothing which I can turn in to money. My watch is in pawn for a Pound Note, my top-coat is in pawn for another Pound Note. We have only seven shillings left."* The last page of the letter is frustratingly missing.

From this point we have no more detail of where he went. He provides information that he is pursuing some opportunity when he states in his last letter, *"It is supposed by my connections in London that I have influence to obtain the thing that now presents itself, but I am assured not a day must be lost."* At the moment there is no firm evidence as to why he left the post of Steward of the Beckett Estate.

It is most fortunate that the Website called *'findagrave.com'* provides the last piece of information on the life of George Merryweather. Here it is listed that, *'He came to the United States in 1836, and has been much respected by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.'* It was also in the USA, Pontiac, Oakland County, Michigan that he died on 22nd February 1852. It is also noted that he wrote and published a book entitled, *'Kings, the Devil's Viceroy's and Representatives on Earth.'* Anyone who has read, *'The Letters of George Merryweather,'* would understand as to why he could have written on such a deep philosophical subject.

The confirmation that this is the correct man comes from the list of children that is provided on the findagrave website. The children's names listed tie up with those that we know and one in particular, Juliet, born in 1816 during the period of her father's tenure as Steward, is listed as, *'baptised in Shrivenham, Berkshire, England.'*

On the subject of his children. His letters give the information that he and Mary had 14 children, seven girls and seven boys. Many of them also emigrated to the USA. The three girls Eliza, Lucy and Juliet lived on the west side of Williams Street in Pontiac, apparently unmarried, all music teachers and known as the *'Misses' Merryweather.'* Algernon Merryweather also went there and held several prominent positions such as, *'Oakland County Deputy Surveyor, U.S Deputy Surveyor,'* and others. He was also involved in Copper mining, his company, *'Merryweather Mining Co.'* Back in England, first born son, George, did well becoming a Doctor of medicine and surgeon, and also an inventor of the, *'Platina Lamp.'* Young Horatio, who as a young lad, featured in the Merryweather letters in Shrivenham, appeared in the Westmorland Gazette on Sat 27th July 1822 as, *'eloped with Miss Hutchinson (an heiress) to Gretna Green.'* Sadly, Mary Hutchinson died in 1839 and Horatio re-married Isabella Clowes. His obituary stated that he came to the USA in 1851 and liked it very much and so brought his family over from England. His

obituary also noted that, *'His artistic mapping stands today unrivalled, a proud memorial to Horatio Merryweather.'*

Although there are gaps in what is known of the life and times of George Merryweather, would it be safe now to suggest that the Shrivenham Heritage Society has reached an appropriate conclusion for this remarkable man?