

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 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 Shrevenham, 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 artistical 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 Shrevenham Heritage Society has reached an appropriate conclusion for this remarkable man?