



Melksham

Married – July 3rd at St. Peter's Church, Frome, Mr. J. Gerard of Frome to Amelia, second daughter of Thomas Bruges, Esquire of Melksham, Wilts. **Bristol Mercury, Saturday July 12th 1834**

[The marriage was by license and the witnesses were Jn Glyde and Eliza Gerard]

There is quite a story behind this seemingly innocuous marriage announcement. Copies of letters, held at the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, between Amelia and her father Thomas Bruges seem to indicate that she had eloped with John Gerard.

From Amelia Gerard, Bath Street, Frome, 11th July 1834 to her parents Mr. & Mrs. T. Bruges

My dear Papa and Mamma

I fell particularly sorry that you should have taken offence at the letter we sent you,... and hope you will not feel offended at my having enclosed a small piece of cake, ... for notwithstanding I admit to having acted in this instance so as to merit your displeasure, I can assure you there is only one thing I have to regret since my marriage, that is that I have not your smiles.... You will no doubt be glad to hear, however you may disapprove of my conduct that we have the

hearty congratulations of all our townspeople, who seem to be all interested in our welfare...

I remain

Your affectionate daughter

Amelia.

So although Amelia admits her behavior has been less than a parent might expect she is bold enough to comment that although her parents are not happy there are plenty of local people who are. One is almost able to hear the fury in her father's reply.

From Mr. Bruges, Melksham, July 12th 1834

Amelia

.... I have returned the parcel you sent and as for your husband, after having been shown the kindness he had in my house to behave in this atrocious and vile manner, I never wish to see him or any of his family again.

T. Bruges

PS----- I do not wish to have any more letters from you, for if you send them I shall not trouble myself to answer them.

From Mr. Bruges, Melksham July 14th 1834

Amelia

I have sent your clothes and for the future you have to apply to your husband for what you want, for you may depend upon it I shall not have any more to do with you or him ... and tell him he acted more like a complete Blackguard than a Gentleman.

T. Bruges

Amelia refuses to give up though and sends another letter at the end of July, 4 weeks after the marriage. This time she is asking for more of her belongings to be sent to her.

From Amelia, Bath Street, Frome July 31st 1834

My dear Papa and Mamma

Although I fear I must still consider myself under your frowns I have now to beg you would indulge me so far as to send my music books, as John has bought a nice piano for me, and I should like to practice a little, also, I should be glad with the little fancy articles,

Humble affectionate and dutiful daughter

Amelia Gerard

Whether there is any response to this letter is not clear, but there is none in the collection. Three months later she tries again.

From Amelia

My dearest Papa

It is with feelings of hope that I ask your pardon for my recent disobedience towards you. it has caused me the most painful sensation and bitter regret that I should have been separated from you for so long a time. I have offended against an affectionate and sincere parent, I am ready to admit and I do hope you will once more hold out your hand of friendship, and receive me again as one of your family, however undeserving I may be of it

..... Having accepted an invitation from Mrs. Sainsbury it necessary that I should pass through Melksham. As I shall be returning in the evening I hope you will guarantee the favour of an interview, however short, that I may once more embrace you, dear Mama, brothers and sisters. If you have no objection to see me please leave a line at the George Inn before 7 o'clock.

I remain with kindest love to yourself, Mamma, brothers and sisters.

Your ever affectionate and humble daughter

Amelia

Her husband John also weighs in with a letter of his own but its tone is unlikely to improve the situation between his wife and her parents

From John Gerard, Frome, Sep 20th 1834

Most Respected Sir

Having been informed that the few hasty lines I sent you on the 3rd July were such as you did not consider at all proper or respectful on my part, if any expressions were improper I am truly sorry for it, as it was not for want of respect I regret that this act should have been the of sewing seeds of discord, but I hope when you consider the great disparity between age and youth you will make some allowances for the part conduct of my dear wife and myself. I therefor hope for the sake of my beloved partner that you will partly overlook our past conduct hoping that the future will make amends for it. I can confidently say it is purely for the sake of restoring your friendship towards my dear wife, whose comfort it is ever my duty to promote.

I remain Sir, with every sentiment of respect, your most obedient servant

John Gerard

Thomas Bruges's reply was to the point

From T. Bruges

Sir

I neither wish to see or receive any further correspondence from you.

T. Bruges

So, not an auspicious start to marriage for Amelia and John. Did the marriage work out? Were Amelia and her parents ever reconciled? Who knows? But the census gives us a little insight into their lives together.

They went on to have at least 5 children, born between 1836 and 1845, who mostly took Bruges as a part of their name; Amelia Bruges Gerard, John Bruges Gerard, William Frederick Gerard, Thomas Bruges Gerard, and Helen Bruges Gerard.

The 1851 census shows them living in St. Peter Port, Guernsey and John is a tallow chandler. Helen had died in 1847 at Portsea, Hampshire, so the family had done some moving around.

In 1861 they are still on Guernsey and John is a soap and candle manufacturer and Amelia, William and Thomas are still living at home and 3 other children, all with the surname Bellamy are listed as boarders. They may possibly be family.

By 1871 they have returned to Frome and are living at Redbridge Lane with Amelia and William, who is now the soap manufacturer.

At the time of the 1881 census Amelia was resident with her daughter Amelia and her husband in Southampton.

Amelia Gerard died in Southampton on 18th October 1888. Grant of Administration to her estate was granted to son Thomas Bruges Gerard on 15th February 1889. She left £45 2s.

John Gerard died on the 26th March 1874. His estate was not settled until 25th February 1889 when grant of administration was awarded to Thomas Bruges Gerard. His father's estate amounted to £134 16s 7d.