

Volume 6

Number 2

Summer 1992

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E D I T O R I A L

It is a pleasure to write the first editorial after Witheridge Day, as it is so good to have met at least some of the members for whom the magazine is intended.

At our meeting this year we had the company of Kathy and Paul Witheridge of Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, and of our new members Ralph and Pam Wetheridge from Bridgend, Wales. Ralph is connected with the Camberwell, London, family, and is the first Wetheridge to join us. As those who have done any research know, we always have to be prepared for Witheridge/Wetheridge names to be intertwined, but the Wetheridges of South London are distinctive in that their name has remained the same since the first records of them appear around the year 1800.

Witheridge Day is reported on in this issue, with notes on the talks we enjoyed. We hope to publish the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, and a Financial Statement later. The changes of officers are noted inside the front cover.

We had been wondering if the number of members who attend Witheridge Day are sufficient to justify hiring the Village Hall at Alderton for our annual meeting, but the enthusiasm of those who attended generated such an atmosphere of good will that it was decided that it was worthwhile to continue at the same venue next year, and so Witheridge Day, 1993, is scheduled for Monday 3rd May, at Alderton, Gloucestershire.

Make a note of the date now!



FAMILY NEWS

We are pleased to learn of the engagement of Adam Cook, second son of Kim and Roy, to Miss Anita Doherty, of West Wickham. Congratulations Adam!

Condolences

Our sympathy goes to Mrs. Margaret Forrester who has informed us of the death, in January of this year, of her mother, Phyllis Doreen Witheridge, née Bishop. Some of you may remember meeting Mrs. Forrester's brother, Malcolm Witheridge, from Penzance, at the first meeting of the Witheridge Society at West Wickham.

NOTES ON WITHERIDGE DAY, 1992

By Joyce Browne

"Oh, what a beautiful morning, Oh what a beautiful day!" - we might well have sung as we headed for Alderton Village Hall and the welcoming cup of tea made by Jason's fiancée, Zoe Mitchell, who presided over the beverage department with decorative efficiency for the rest of the day.

The proceedings were opened by the Chairman, Graham, who welcomed visitors from a wide area - Kathy and Paul Witheridge from Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, Ralph and Pam Wetheridge from Bridgend, Wales, June and David Witheridge from Plympton, Plymouth, Sue, Maureen and Richard Witheridge from Bath, John Witheridge from Kent (via Wales), Annette Witheridge, Zoe and Jason Cook from London, Kim and Roy Cook from Kent, and the local member, Philip. We made the acquaintance of Ralph's beautiful guide dog, Zorro - who made his mark on our affections, but failed to impress the Cook's little dog, Jeannie.

Our knowledge of Alderton village was extended by a talk from Philip, who has made a study of its past, and of some of the families who contributed to its way of life a hundred years ago, and who are still represented among its inhabitants. "A pleasant place to live, in 1892" is how Philip has described the village in his booklet which was on sale in aid of Church funds.

As we listened to Kathy Witheridge we appreciated the depth of her research for her talk on the emigration of families from Devon to Canada and America in the nineteenth century. It was very moving to hear of the hardships endured by those who left Devon for the New World (although those who left from Devonshire ports fared somewhat better than those who sailed from Liverpool).

Kathy distributed presentation packages of pictures and information, so that we could study at our leisure details of the voyages our forefathers had undertaken, and read of the conditions they found when they reached their destination, which were often better than those they had left behind.

The displays this year were as varied as before, with paintings by Graham Browne and Sue Witheridge, and patchwork quilting by June Witheridge.

There were photographs of art work and model villages and gardens made by Gordon Rossiter, son of member Albertina Rossiter. Kathy Witheridge had made pot pourri sachets of lace mounted in attractive frames which could be hung as fragrant pictures, and she also displayed ball point pens, (unusual with a rubber on the end) and pencils stamped with the name of the Society. These were all sold, and Kathy donated the proceeds (£30.00d) to the Society. How she and Paul managed to bring all these from Canada I do not know!

The competitions which followed the talks created not only interest, but some hilarity. Paul was persuaded into collating the voting forms and analysing the results, and announced that Sue had swept the board with first, second and third prize in the photographic landscapes section. June's photograph was first in the "Buildings and other subjects" section and Sue and Graham were second and third.

June won the poetry section with her evocative poem "Ermington in August". "Run off" she told me, on an old piece of paper on her way to the meeting!

The writer was voted first in the "Historic Hats" competition with a bonnet of the 1850's. I explained that the bonnet was being worn by my great great aunt Elizabeth Cassell Witheridge at the moment she died in 1859, and mentioned some of the peculiar instructions left by Elizabeth concerning her burial, and how the hat had come down to me. John 'capped' it all by donning a World War II gas mask and saying that his ancestor had worn it whilst burying mine!

Kim's opera hat, worn by her great grandfather, Edmund Witheridge, was admired, and she amused everyone by telling us that he was a strong supporter of the temperance movement, perhaps because his wife was a gin addict who was apt to embarrass the family by appearing at inopportune moments waving a gin bottle.

Graham, from his Norfolk background, entered the family relic of an imposing Imperial Norfolk Yeomanry helmet, complete with brass chin strap, spike and plume.

Considering the quality and quantity of food offered, lunch appeared in a remarkably short space of time, and we enjoyed a sit down feast. Kim remarked that one 'constant' she has found in her researches into the family is that Witheridges all enjoy their food.

The Annual General Meeting, briskly conducted by Graham, was the first item on the programme for the afternoon, and we hope to publish the Minutes in a later edition.

The talk by Kim on "Old Devon Customs", which followed the Meeting, described country customs throughout the seasons of the year from Christmas Wassail, through the rites of spring and midsummer to the observances of the next winter. We realised how joyful the country people must have felt to see their harvest home.

It did not escape notice that most of the Devonshire rituals involved drinking copious amounts of cider.

The Chairman's closing address, when he thanked all those who had worked so hard to make the occasion a success, marked the end of a happy day.

Susan Witheridge, who had such a success in the competition on Witheridge Day, would like to extend her photographic activities, and wonders if this would, be of interest to members who might like photographs taken of places they themselves cannot visit. At present, Sue could undertake projects in areas which can be reached by car from her home in Bath, Avon.

If anyone is interested please contact Sue at:-

2, Apsley Road,
Newbridge,
BATH,
Avon
BA1 3LP

Research Report

By Joyce Browne

Complied from notes and information supplied by Kathy Witheridge, our North American Representative

Kathy has been tireless and ingenious in her search for Witheridges in Canada and America, and this spring her efforts were rewarded by contact with a Mr. Clarence Ayre, of Edam, Saskatchewan. Clarence Ayre is the son of Sarah Maude Witheridge and Thomas Henry Ayre (see family tree pages 8 and 9). He is a second cousin twice removed to Paul, and to our member Barbara Dimambro, first cousin once removed to member John Douglas Witheridge, and is also connected with members Mildred Creech and Ruby Jackman. (I hope I have those relationships correctly - kinships were never my strong point!)

Kathy had taken notes on some obituaries she had been reading for the year 1982. One was for a George Tomblin, of North Idaho, who had married a Marguerite Wood, the daughter of Florence Mabel (Witheridge) Wood (see family tree). In George Tomblin's obituary was mention of a widow and sons still alive, and so Kathy went through telephone directories, obtained likely addresses, and wrote to a Carl Tomblin who she thought might be a grandson of the deceased.

Imagine her surprise when she received a telephone call from Marguerite Tomblin herself, who gave Kathy information about her family, and her Yorkshire antecedents on her father's side. Still more surprising was the receipt of a letter from Marguerite Tomblin's cousin, Clarence Ayre - a letter which gives us a fascinating glimpse of a life of which we in this country can be only dimly aware.

The courageous group of people who left their homes in Bradworthy and district in the early nineteenth century were for the most part devout followers of a movement called "Bible Christians". They were intertwined in faith and marriage. The names 'Oke', 'Grills' and 'Saunders', occur frequently among the Witheridge family connections, and the different branches of the Witheridges can trace roots back to a common ancestor - James - baptised in Fremington in 1604 and married in Ilfracombe in 1627.

Before spreading their branches throughout North America and Canada, they settled in Ontario, where they found a good living, much better than the harsh and seemingly hopeless conditions existing at that time in agricultural Britain.

They worked hard, and helped to build civilised and prosperous communities such as Bowmanville and Darlington, where two brothers, John and George, sons of George Witheridge and Mary Saunders, lived (see family tree).

John's daughter, Sarah Maude, was married in 1905, and the newspaper report sheds light on the social life of the township, and the standard of living they enjoyed.

"A pretty but quiet wedding took place at 4.0 p.m. on Wednesday, August 30th, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Witheridge, Darlington, when their youngest daughter, Maud, was joined in wedlock with Thomas H. Ayre, Darlington. The bride was given away by her father and was gowned in champagne crepe de Paris trimmed with lace and chiffon, carrying a bouquet of white asters. The bride's going away costume was a suit of green broadcloth with white silk waist and hat to match.

Rev. J. R. Butler performed the ceremony in the presence of a few intimate friends. After congratulations all sat down to a wedding dinner, the table being decorated with pink and white asters. The happy couple left in the evening for Toronto and Markham en route to Woodbridge, North Dakota, where they intend to reside. A number of young friends assembled at the depot and gave them a hearty send off of rice and good wishes. The presents included silverware, glassware, table linen etc., showing the esteem in which the bride was held."

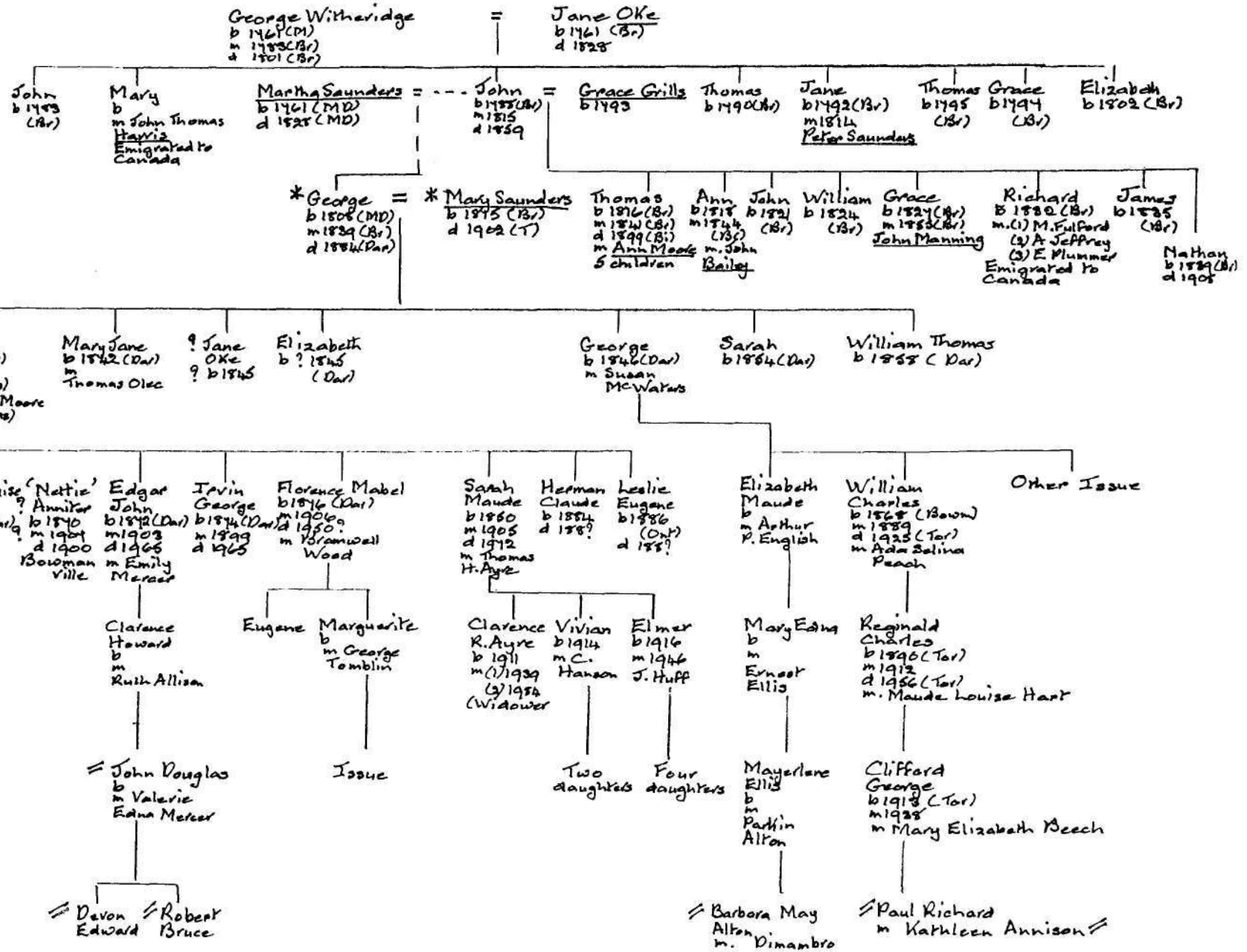
Another newspaper report speaks of an evening at the Christian Endeavour Society, where Miss Witheridge had been organist for a number of years, and of the presentation to her of silver knives and forks, silver sugar bowl and a silver ring tray. As well as her talent for playing the organ Sarah Maude had a musical singing voice, and it is evident from the reports that she was going to be missed in Darlington.

After the wedding Sarah Maude and her husband went to North Dakota in order to earn enough money to set up a farm, or homestead of their own.

Mr. Ayre's letter to Kathy tells the story:-

"My grandparents (John Witheridge and Miriam Moore) came up to this area in 1919 with their daughter Mabel Witheridge who was married to Bramwell Wood. My grandparents had lost

THE WITHERIDGE FAMILY
OF BRADWORTH, DEVON,
DARLINGTON, ONTARIO,
AND SASKATCHEWAN



what money they had in a bank failure at that time, and the Wood family thought they would go to Canada and try farming. Besides the grandparents they brought their two children: Eugene and Marguerite, the woman you were in touch with at Hayden Lake, Idaho.

The settled on fairly poor land and after about five years they moved down to Coue-d, Alene Idaho, and left the grandparents at my folks. Mr. Wood went to work at a lumber mill in C Dalene and also for a few years he was member of the state legislature at Boise Idaho.

My parents (Sarah Maude and Thomas Ayre) were married in Ontario in 1905. After marriage they went to North Dakota to work for others so that they could earn some money and get some equipment before they went to homestead in Saskatchewan.

After the Wood family left, the grandparents lived in a little house in my parents' yard until my grandma died and then grandfather lived with us till he died.

After a couple of years in North Dakota my parents were able to save enough and get enough equipment to come west. That is why they had a few horses when they moved up. Marguerite told me that you had information about how many horses and cows they had for some years. It amazes me how you were able to gather all that information!

However, having a few horses meant that dad was able to work for other settlers, breaking new land, because oxen were not as useful for that. However it meant that dad would be away quite a bit. Mother told one story about when she was home alone, and a group of Indians came with many wagons and horseback riders and hounds. After hearing tales about Indians before she left Ontario, it must have been quite frightening. However they rode round the cabin a few times and went on. There was a creek less than a mile from there and they used to camp there going from one reserve to another near Jackfish Lake. The creek was Blackfoot creek, and went across the quarter dad later owned, and where he was killed. (NW 6-50-18-W3).

The cabin I mentioned above was at first just a 10 by 14 lumber affair with tarpaper on the outside. Later when dad could gather some logs a larger log building was built with prairie sods on the roof. Of course, when it rained for a day outside it rained inside for three days. Mother tells of keeping the travelling minister overnight and the only dry place was under the table.

I was not around yet in those days and after 1910 when you correctly found that the homestead was proved up and granted clear title; dad and mother bought the homestead just south of their own. This one had been previously been proved up by a man named Ed Bell and we still call it the Bell quarter today. It had a better house and water supply. In February 1911 I was born, but not at the home place. Mother went to within 8 miles of North Battleford to be closer to a doctor. The farmhouse where I was born was for years known as Flanders farm with dutch wooden shoes on the gateposts. It has only about ten years ago been demolished. I was the first white child in the homestead area.

When dad came up from Dakota to select a homestead there were people in North Battleford who made a business of taking people out to select their homesteads. Of course, by 1906 you had to go quite a way from North Battleford as closer places had been taken. The west was surveyed in townships of 36 sections (six miles square) four quarters to a section. Certain sections were set aside for settlers, other sections were for C.P.R. grants, others for Hudson Bay Co., and some were designated as school sections. The school was built around 1915 (Blackfoot School) and was located a mile west of our home and that is where I took all of my schooling (grade ten). When school started, 1915, it was held for a short time in the log house that my folks had just moved from, until the school building was completed.

When the railway came up in 1911 the settlement known as Edam was started. It was twelve miles from the homestead. It now has a population of about 450. Like all small villages in this area there is a large percentage of older people, widows and widowers like me. There are a few younger families, some are farming from here and others are teachers or nurses working here. The first hospital in Edam was built in 1917 and it was the first hospital in Saskatchewan to be built by municipalities. I met my wife Ethel when she came to Edam to work as matron of the hospital in 1938. She had her R.N. and had trained in Orangeville, Toronto, Ontario.

The businesses still here are: two general stores, two restaurants, four gas stations one bulk oil, credit union, municipal office, village office, firehall, senior citizens centre, liquor store, hotel and pub, school to grade 12, gymnasium, covered skating rink and hall, curling rink, three sheet artificial ice, legion hall, three churches and a hospital, eight bed and twelve bed level three care. The cost was around three and a half million. We have a resident doctor, but are finding it hard to keep one. The facilities are nearly full at present.

There are also two grain elevator companies, an electric shop, a resident plumber, a carpenter, seed cleaning plant, laundromat and car wash, and a beauty parlour. When I read of all the places I have listed I can hardly believe it's the same place I live in; because after all it is just another small village trying to stay alive.

We have natural gas available and each location has their own water system, sandpoints about eight to fifteen foot deep, and a village sewer system. There is an oil field just west of Edam and there are at present about three hundred wells. The oil is quite heavy so production is not that great and oil prices are low just now. The oil is trucked from Edam to Lloydminster, Alberta. The farming at Edam is grain, oilseeds, dairy and beef.

The town was at first mainly Dutch people, therefore the Dutch name, however it is now quite mixed with quite a few French."

(Mr. Clarence Ayre married Gertrude Ethel Benson in 1939, and she died in 1981. He married Alida Peppinck in 1984 and she died thirteen months later)

The contrast for Clarence's mother, Sarah Maude Witheridge, between her home in Ontario and her new home in Saskatchewan must have been frightening, but she survived and lived to be ninety two!

Thomas Ayre, Clarence's father, was killed instantly in an accident with a horse and wagon on 6th October, 1942, when he was 62 years old.

In his letter to Kathy, Clarence said that he was afraid that his information might be 'a bit boring'! No comment is needed!

We are very much indebted to Kathy and to Mr. Clarence Ayre for all his information and we can now picture his town of Edam, past and present. Thank you both!

The winner of the Witheridge Day poetry competition was the poem "Ermington in August", and "Two Little Boys" was written for the magazine.

It seemed appropriate to place them on consecutive pages, as without collusion, both authors have written of Ermington, south Devon, although in "Two Little Boys", the name of the village is not mentioned.

For me, the two poems evoke different mental pictures, and it would be interesting to hear the reactions of readers, especially those who know the village.

Editor

ERMINGTON IN AUGUST

Summer's day, humid and heavy, oppressive,
My thoughts as I stand there, reflective, regressive,
The silence is absolute, shimmering, slumbering,
The old woman climbs the hill, heavily lumbering.
Church with its crooked spire, gleaming, leaning,
A feeling of timelessness, senses reeling.
The memory become confused, centuries merging,
The village seems so unchanged, ages converging,
There's a feeling of déjà vu, repetition,
Generations reaching back to creation.

by June Witheridge

TWO LITTLE BOYS

The bells were pealing, on that very first time
When John met Richard, and those bells did chime,
The war had ended, and up went a cheer,
On faces around, showed that happiness tear.

That terrible pair ran wild and wide,
And from John's mother Richard did hide,
They hunted slow worms in the vestry patch
But never a one did this tiny pair catch.

Beating with sticks and a jam jar or two,
"I almost got that one. What about you?"
Scrambling in heather, tall weeds as well,
From early morning until the evening's knell.

Richard the tease, with his small impish face,
Laughing, tormenting, but full of good grace.
Down by the horse trough and up at the square,
Where you find Richard, then John would be there.

Down at the bridge watching fish being caught,
Cricket in the field, being out for nought,
Up at the bakery, smelling the air,
Each morning that's where you'd find this terrible pair.

Richard in trouble, then so would be John,
For he was so small and easily led on.
Richard was older, by two year or more,
And poor little John, just two over four.

The holiday ended and each went their way,
Until they met again, one Witheridge Day.
They talked over memories of that time long ago,
And wondered where all those long years did go.

While all these thoughts are with us just now,
I'll put pen to paper and tell you just how
I've managed to get all these memories here -
By listening to stories told - with a smile and a tear.

by Mayda Witheridge

PPR WILLS AND ADMONS

1964 Witheridge, Reuben William, of Stanbury Avenue. Fishponds, Bristol died 21 January, 1963 (age 82) Admons Bristol 15 January to Elizabeth Lilian Thomas, married woman.

Witheridge, Stephen Henry, of Fore Street, Bishopsteington, Devon, died 31 March, 1964, (age 65). Admons Exeter 4 May to Ethel May Witheridge, widow.

1965 Wetheridge, George Alfred, 4 Brandon Road, Wood Street, Walthamstow, London E17, died 16 April, 1965 (Age 61) at Whipp's Cross Hospital, London, E11. Admons London, 30 June to Mary Ann Witheridge widow.

Witheridge - no entries

1966 Wetheridge, Mary Ann, 4 Brandon Road, London E17, died 22 July 1966 (age 57) at Connaught Hospital, London E17. Admons London, 16 September, to Ellen Dennis, married woman.

Witheridge, Ellen Hicks, 5, Taroveor Terrace, Penzance, died 8 September, 1966 (age 83) at West Cornwall Hospital, Penzance. Probate Bodmin, 10 October to Richard Leah Harvey, retired painter and decorator.

Witheridge, Fernande Sylvie Marie, of 24 Queen's Road, Thame, Oxon, died 11 September, 1965 (age 65). Admons Oxford 9 February to Arthur Richard Witheridge, Company Director, and Monica Marie Dunlop, married woman.

1967 Witheridge, Eileen, 18 Highcroft Road, Erdington Birmingham, died 19 February, 1967 (age 44). Admons Birmingham 16 October to Dennis Witheridge television salesman.

(From this date names of persons to whom probate or admons have been granted are not shown in the indexes)

1968 Witheridge, Maud, of Miller House, Launceston died 5 April, 1968 (age 93) Probate Bodmin 14 June.

- 1969 Witheridge, Ethel May, dob 17.5.1888, of 213, St. Mary Church Road, Torquay, died 2 August, 1969, Probate Bristol.
- Witheridge, James George, dob about 1899, 169 Plymstock Road, Oreston, Plymouth, died 8 September, 1969. Probate Bristol 1 October.
- Witheridge, Leslie Barnard, dob 5.2.1917. 182 Bassaleg Road, Newport, Mon., died 12 June, 1969. Probate Llandaff 17 July.
- 1970 Witheridge, Arthur Harry, dob 6.3.1892. Flat 9, Brache Court, Seymour Road, Luton, died 2 May, 1970 Admons London 7 July.
- Witheridge, John James, dob 11.12.1877. 11 Hugh Avenue, Shiremoor, Northumberland, died 19 October, 1970. Admons Newcastle-on-Tyne 14 December.

"FOUND"

We now know that the maiden name of our member Albertina Rossiter's great grandmother was 'Cumming' (see Research Report Vol 6. No.1 Spring 1992). Albertina Cumming was only 17 when she married Edwin Witheridge in Clifton, in July 1863.

Seen in the 'Daily Telegraph' for the 6th May, 1992

"Battleaxe"

"A Crawley reader attended a family history society meeting at which a woman proudly announced that one of her ancestors fought at the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644.

"On which side?" asked a colleague.

"On my mother's" she retorted."

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Devon Record Office, (Tel.No. 0392-53509)
Castle Street, Exeter, Devon EX4 3PQ

West Devon Record Office, (Tel.No. 0752-26485)
Clare Place, Coxside, Plymouth Devon PL4 0JW

North Devon Record Office,
Tuly Street, Barnstaple, Devon.

Devon Family History Society,
Membership Secretary, Mrs. P. Witwica,
4a Cookworthy Road, North Prospect, Plymouth, Devon
PL2 2LP

Society of Genealogists, (Tel.No. 01-251-8799)
14 Charterhouse Buildings, London EC1

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