



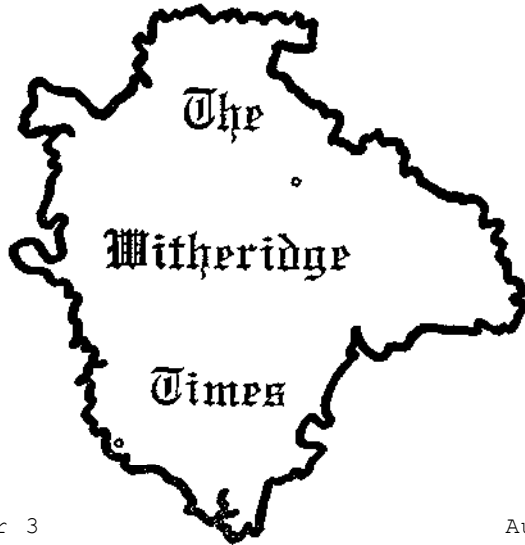
Volume 8

Number 3

Autumn 1994

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E D I T O R I A L

Greetings from a sultry summer in south east England. People who say that a British summer is three days of sunshine, then a thunderstorm have been proved wrong this year. In spite of the sun, I always feel a little sad when I write the autumn editorial and realise that the year is going into decline. Nevertheless, I can report that our Society is not in decline. It is forming new contacts, our researchers are entering new fields, and we continue to welcome new members.

Our latest member is Mrs. Catherine Spina (her address and details are in the 'New Members' section). May she and her family find their association with the Society an interest and a pleasure.

Our Membership Secretary, John Witheridge, reports that the Society is now a fully fledged member of the Federation of Family History Societies, and there are two announcements from them in this magazine.

Kim Cook has discovered that next year the May Day Bank Holiday will not be held on the 1st May, but by Government decree has been transferred to Monday 8th May, 1995, in order to coincide with the 50th anniversary of VE Day. Kim has managed to re-arrange the booking of the Village Hall at Alderton. Witheridge Day, 1995, will now be on Monday, 8th May. Please make the alteration in your diaries.

-----  
As I write the tragic news has come that Simon Richard Witheridge, younger son of Philip, past President of the Society and publisher and distributor of this magazine, and Jean Witheridge his wife, has died. Simon, who was 26 years old, was killed in a road accident during the night of 20th August. No further details are available.

I am sure that I speak for the whole Society when I say that I am struggling to find words to express our feelings of grief and sympathy for Jean and Philip. Our thoughts are with them.

-----  
*Foyce*

## FAMILY NEWS

I have been in touch recently with our member Bessie Witheridge of Hampton Magna, Warwickshire. Bessie has arthritis and has had to have two knee replacements, but is making a good recovery. Bessie is a judge of pedigree dogs, and hopes to resume judging at dog shows shortly. We wish you a speedy recovery, Bessie.

---

## FOUND!

Kathy Witheridge of Ontario found a list of marriages taken from the Ontario marriage index. It gave the name "C.W. Witheridge", married on the 27th February, 1895.

We thought we did not know a "C.W." especially as, when Kathy obtained a copy of the certificate, it stated that "C.W." was 30 years old, born in England, parents "Matthew and Elizabeth Witheridge".

Matthew is not a known Witheridge name, and after investigation we are certain that somewhere along the official line the word "Nathan" was miscopied into "Matthew". "C.W." was Christopher Witheridge, son of Nathan and Elizabeth Wood, of the Bradworthy, Devon, family line, born c.1865. Nathan was the son of John Witheridge and Grace Grills.

Christopher married "Lottie" - Charlotte Bates, in Toronto on the 27th February, 1895, and the Witnesses were William and Sarah Witheridge.

Some interesting relationships emerge here. William was the son of George Witheridge and Mary Saunders, themselves first cousins. Christopher's father Nathan and William's father George were half brothers. So what would Christopher and William be called - half first cousins? To complicate matters further, Kathy's evidence shows that the Witness Sarah Witheridge was Sarah Victoria Bates - sister of the Bride Charlotte Bates. The first cousins (half), married sisters. I'll leave you to work that one out.

From the IGI for North America Kathy has sent us more information which is listed over the page:

NAME: WITHERIDGE, Prudence  
EVENT: Birth 8th October, 1686  
Salem, Essex, Massachusetts  
FATHER: Silvester WITHERIDGE  
MOTHER: Mary

NAME: WITHERIDGE, Silvester  
EVENT: Birth 17th March, 1688  
Salem, Essex, Massachusetts  
FATHER: Silvester WITHERIDGE  
MOTHER: Mary

NAME: WITHERIDGE, Mary  
EVENT: Marriage 18th December, 1694  
Salem, Essex, Massachusetts  
SPOUSE: Benjamin PROCTER

NAME: WETHERIDGE, Mary  
EVENT: Marriage 18th December, 1694  
Of Ipswich, Essex, Massachusetts  
SPOUSE: Andrew BURNHAM

Silvester is a name that John Witheridge has been investigating as he has discovered a Sylvester at the head of the Kent family line about which he has written. A Sylvester Witheridge married a Margaret Noadwik in Chatham in 1693.

Like Kathy, John wondered if Silvester could be connected to the Silvester Witheridge born in Modbury, Devon, in 1626 - father Edmond Wetheredge, mother Alice Werren. Investigations have, so far, failed to reveal any link, although Silvester is not a common Witheridge name. If anyone out there has any information about Silvesters, Prudence, or the two Marys, or any ideas about them - please let us know!

Announcement received from the Federation of Family History Societies

FEDERATION OF FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETIES  
21st ANNIVERSARY 1995

The Federation of Family History Societies announces

*Threads of Family History*

By kind permission of the Ontario Genealogical Society on whose idea this is based.

Put down your pens, switch off your computers, and delegate your indexing; now for something different!

Prepare to participate in *Threads of Family History*, a special competition of textile craft to be exhibited by the FFHS during Autumn 1995 to celebrate its 21st Anniversary. The exhibition will attempt to show how family history can be creatively used in the many forms of needlework and other textile crafts.

Craftwork itself connects us with our ancestors. In every culture, both women and men took great pride in the production of distinctive decorated textiles. For this exhibition, participants will be asked to take the process beyond the merely decorative - integrating family history - to produce a unique heirloom for future generations.

Any type of textile craft is eligible - embroidery, applique, quilting, needlepoint, weaving, rug hooking and beadwork to name a few techniques. There's no need to be an expert craftsperson.

But before you begin your "heirloom", write for the complete rules and an entry form - on or after 1st October, 1994. Address your letters to Mrs. Jill Valentine, 157 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JZ, England, enclosing 9" x 4" self-addressed stamped envelope or 2 International Reply Coupons.

There will be two classes of entry, Individual and Collective (i.e. Society or Group) but please note: application is restricted to members of the Federation's family history societies.

HERITAGE RETRIEVAL PROJECT, QUEENSLAND

A copy of the following letter has come to the Witheridge Society from the Federation of Family History Societies, and we publish it here (in part) in case any of our readers would like to take part in this project.

It is addressed to: The Administrator, Federation of Family History Societies, The Benson Room, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS U.K.

Heritage Retrieval Project,  
Australian High Commission,  
Australia House,  
Strand, London WC2B 4LA

Heritage Retrieval Project,  
State Library of Queensland  
P.O. Box 3468  
South Brisbane Qld. 4101

Phone 071 887 5261  
Fax 071 240 5333

Phone 617 840 7890  
Fax 617 846 2421

"The State Library of Queensland, Australia, is undertaking a search for original material relating to the history of the State of Queensland. Letters, diaries, manuscripts, photographs, art works, ephemera, maps, business records and documents are sought. Printed material (books, journals, newspapers) may also be of interest. Many early administrators of the Colony of Queensland returned home to Britain after completing a contract, and their papers relating to the Colony returned with them. Many ordinary immigrants made no written record of their experiences in the colony except for the letters sent home to Britain. Early photographs were also purchased for the purpose of showing the family at home what it was like in the colonies.

I would like to bring the Queensland Heritage Retrieval Project to the attention of your members as I feel that much of the material for which we are seeking is in private hands. Would it be possible to mention the project in any publications of your Federation . . . ."

SIGNED: CHRISTINA EALING-GODBOLD

Senior Librarian  
Reference and Special Collections



PORTRAIT OF A SURVIVOR

by Joyce Browne

Female: Trade: Dressmaker, Height: 5' 3 1/2", Age: 33

Complexion: Dark, Head: Long, Hair: Black, Visage: ??

Forehead: High, Eyebrows:Black, Eyes:Brown, Mouth: Sharp,

Nose: Broken, Native Place: Sheerness

Anyone you know? You are looking at the official Police description, Page 723, of Convict Emily Witheridge, aged 33.

Emily Witheridge, then aged 32, was convicted at Exeter Assizes on the 23rd February, 1847, of stealing, on three occasions, items of clothing including a pair of boots. The only item recorded about her was her age, and that she could read and write. She was sentenced to transportation for seven years, but I had no evidence that she was actually transported.

I thought that there was circumstantial evidence that she was Emily Blake (see article 'Found - not quite' magazine Spring 1994). We now have proof that she was Emily Blake Witheridge, born circa 1815, and that she arrived in Van Diemen's Land, as Tasmania was called then, in 1848.

Emily Blake married Abel Witheridge in East Stonehouse, Plymouth, in January, 1838. He was described as a bachelor of full age, and she as a spinster of full age. Abel's father was William Witheridge, a millwright, and Emily's father was Charles Blake, a tailor. No profession was noted for Emily, but Abel was a stonemason. The place of residence for both was Plymouth.

Subsequent documents from the penal system give Emily's place of birth as Sheerness, so how she came to meet and marry Abel in Devon we do not know.

Their first child was William Moses Bowden Witheridge, born in June, 1838. Abel, as father, registered the birth, and the family were still living in Plymouth. A girl, Phillippa, was born in 1841, and by that time Abel and Emily had moved to Devonport. George Henry, born 1845, was the next and last child.

We shall never know why Emily committed the offences. Her husband's uncle Arthur was a builder in comfortable circumstances, and a freeman of the City of Plymouth.

Her father-in-law, William, was a burgess of the City, owning property and entitled to vote. Other relations would seem not to be so poor as to be unable to help if Abel and Emily had desperate money troubles. Was Emily a compulsive shop-lifter?

Whatever the reason for Emily's offences, did no-one appeal against the sentence on behalf of those three children, aged nine, six and two years? Although it was unlikely that any appeal would have succeeded. Sentence of transportation of women was seldom remitted, and, faced with a shortage of women in Australia, with the utmost inhumanity and cynicism, the Authorities regarded a woman prisoner as an Item, men for the use of.

Emily left England on the ship "Cadet". She was never to see her husband and children again. Women had to endure the bad conditions on convict ships and suffer the attentions of guards and prisoners alike. Many women became more depraved than the men, and many took to drink, which was obtainable, to dull the pain of their existence. Emily survived the voyage, but was this where she suffered her broken nose?

From the year 1842 a new penal system was decreed for Van Diemen's Land. Called 'The Probation System' it forbade the hiring out of convicts as labour for settler families. Instead the prisoners were to pass through five stages of probation, and earn their freedom through a system of marks for industry and good behaviour. First they were sent to the hell-hole of the notorious Norfolk Island (this was the men), where they served with hard labour. If they survived this they were transferred to Van Diemen's Land on "gang probation", still doing hard labour on clearing land, and building roads and bridges. The next stage was a pass to work for an approved master, the fourth stage was a "Ticket of leave", which meant that a man could choose his own master, and the fifth stage was a conditional or an absolute pardon.

The system was the same for women, except that by this time they were not sent to Norfolk Island, and did not do heavy work in a gang, although they still had to serve six months "gang probation", working in a place of detention.

This system was intended to give the convicts some incentive to work, and by giving them some religious and practical instruction, fit them to re-enter the community able to resist the temptations which would confront them.

It sounded good, but it didn't work. The Government failed to honour its promises of support with money and equipment.

(There is nothing new under the sun) Administrators were sadistic, corrupt, or merely incompetent, and the economy of Van Diemen's Land was in deep recession, so that there was no work for convicts passing into the later stages of probation. By 1846 the penal system of the island was a farce and in a state of chaos. The Female Factories at Hobart and Launceston were said to be "sumps of chaos and evil", and the British Government was forced to suspend transportation for two years.

Was Emily lucky or unlucky to be among the first convicts to arrive in January, 1848, when transportation was resumed? The Government had promised to build a new prison for females at Hobart. It was to be under the supervision of a Dr. and Mrs. Bowden, a humane and enlightened couple. The prison was never built. Instead, an old warship, the Anson, was fitted out as a floating penitentiary. It was supposed to have new ideas of ventilation and cleanliness, but if you look at the plan of the orlop deck you will see that it has only four lavatories, placed amidships, for 300 prisoners. I doubt if any ventilation system would have been equal to that.

Emily saw the Anson, where she was to serve her six months gang probation, anchored on the Derwent River at the Risdon Ferry. What a contrast to the teeming ports of Plymouth and Devonport! Derwent River looks tranquil, nevertheless there was constant activity aboard the Anson. Mrs. Bowden believed that idleness led to wickedness and instituted schemes to keep her prisoners busy. One of her schemes was to buy large quantities of textiles and straw and have the women make clothes and hats to sell to the inhabitants of Hobart. It was here that I think Emily was lucky. She was a dressmaker, and her skills may have given her a privileged position. At the end of her probation her report reads "Very good". Emily seems to be making the best of her new life.

On the 10th September, 1850, Emily was granted a Ticket of Leave - this meant that she could find paid employment as long as it was not in Hobart - which did not wish to be swamped with convict labour. Was this when she met Alexander Coyle, her future partner?

In 1852 she was granted a conditional pardon and a free and full pardon followed in 1854. This shows that she had lost no marks for bad behaviour.

Alexander Coyle was Scottish, from Argyllshire. He was a seaman who was convicted of theft, and transported to Van Diemen's Land where it would appear he met Emily. We hope to know more about him later.

Alexander Coyle applied to marry Emily on the 11th February, 1851, and permission was granted. Did he know that Emily was married with three children in England? Emily said she was a widow, and the authorities did not enquire too closely. After all, a husband in England was lost, as good as dead. There was not much prospect of Abel and the three children being able to join Emily, even if they wanted to, and very little likelihood of Emily being able to afford the passage back home.

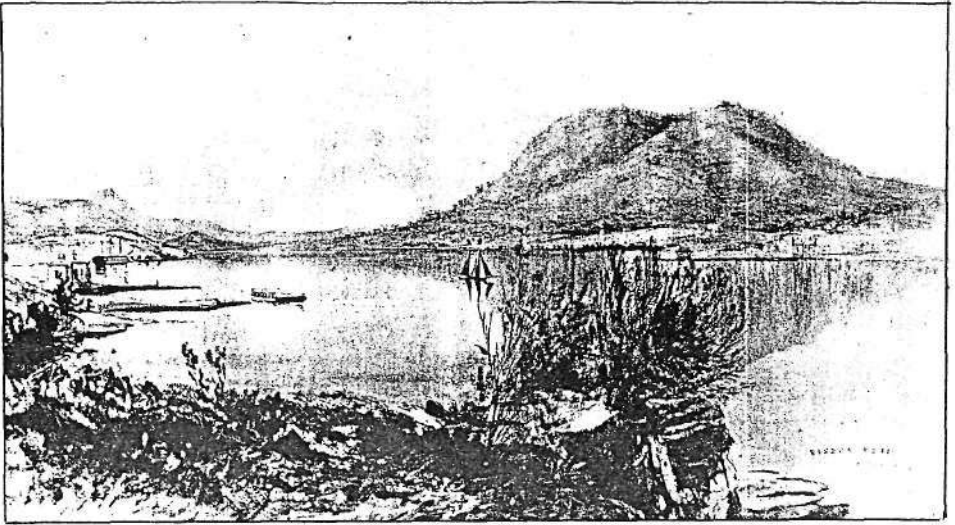
Emily and Alexander Coyle were married in St. John's Church, Ross, Campbell Town on the 10th April, 1851. Campbell Town was a settlement on the banks of the river Tamar, another reminder to Emily of her lost home. She was nine years older than her new husband, but perhaps with her black hair and brown eyes she looked younger despite the hardships she had endured.

An unexpected development may have made it possible for Alexander and Emily to prosper. Gold was discovered in Australia in April 1851 - it revolutionised the economy. Whole ports and towns were deserted as people scrambled to the gold fields. There was a drain of labour from Van Diemen's Land, and skilled and steady workers were in demand.

On 3rd February, 1852, Emily gained her conditional pardon. Before she could obtain her full pardon transportation from England ceased. Van Diemen's Land determined to put its convict past behind, and in October, 1853, the island changed its name to Tasmania, after the Dutch navigator who had discovered it. Emily could not put her past behind her completely until her full pardon was granted in 1854. Where she and Alexander went then we are trying to discover.

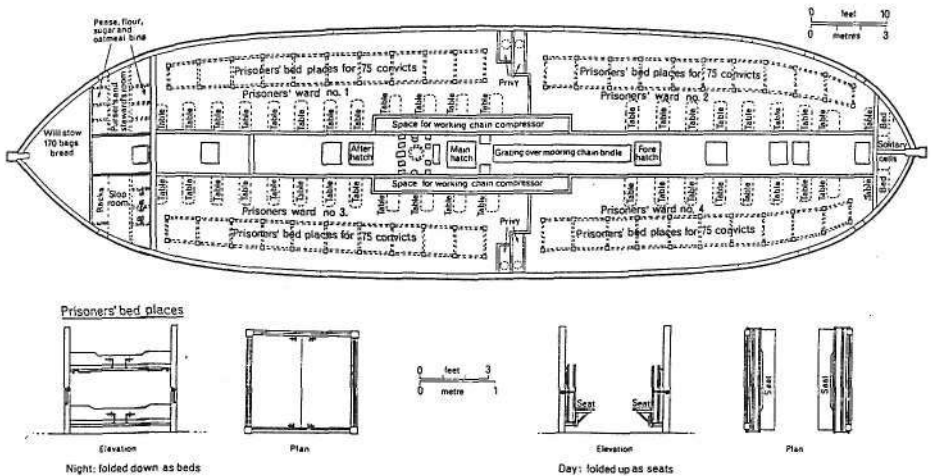
Did Emily know that her husband, Abel, was styling himself "Widower"? He died in 1861, a few months before his father, William Witheridge. Did she know that her eldest son, William Moses Bowden, went to the Midlands and married, and founded a family line there? Her daughter Phillipa died unmarried in Devonport in 1868, aged 27. Most poignant of all, did she know that her baby George Henry, aged two when she was sentenced, died aged 13? His death certificate tells us that he died of Typhus Fever, which he had had for two months, with diarrhoea and exhaustion. His father, Abel, was present at the death. (I suspect that the cause of death was Typhoid and not Typhus fever)

Among all the uncertainties, one thing is clear - Emily was a survivor, and Emily, I salute you!



ABOVE: The Risdon Ferry on the Derwent River in 1846.  
 Taken from a painting by Simpkinson de Wesselow.  
 The prison hulk 'Anson' moored in the river near  
 the left bank and above the ferry.

BELOW: Plan of lowest deck of the prison hulk 'Anson'.



Number.	When married and where.	Name and Surname	Age.	Rank.	Signature and Description of Parties.	Name of Clergyman, Officiating Minister, or Deputy Registrar.	When registered.	Signature of Deputy Registrar or Officiating Minister.
52 89.	St. John's Hall 10th April 1854	Alexander Coyle Emily Kitteridge	28. 37.	Sergeant Widow	Alexander Coyle Emily Kitteridge Widow	Rev. John Bealford	10th April 1854	Wm. Lloyd Bealford

Marrried in the ~~Methodist~~ ~~Church~~

according to the Rites and Ceremonies of

~~the United Methodist Church~~

This Marriage was solemnized between us  
 Alexander Coyle  
 Emily Kitteridge

In the Presence of us,  
 Edward Lloyd Bealford  
 Minister.  
 Wm. Lloyd Bealford  
 Minister.

ABOVE: Emily's Marriage Certificate.  
 BELOW: Convict Records. Emily's entry at bottom of page.

Folio Number	Name	Height	Age	Traile or Calling	Where tried	When tried	Sentence	Native Place	Religion	Apprenticeship - where last residing	Ship Character	Offence
1	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
2	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
3	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
4	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
5	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
6	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
7	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
8	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
9	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
10	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
11	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
12	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall
13	William Kitteridge	5ft 7in	37	Widow	St. John's Hall	April 10 1854	7	St. John's Hall	Methodist	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall	St. John's Hall

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WILLIAM DE LEWIS

Transported for

stealing property, opened Post Office  
at Kansas, Missouri, & also committed the same  
at Lexington & 20 spots elsewhere in Missouri  
excepted from many spots

Embarked  
Tried & convicted at St. Louis, Mo. 11/25/18  
Arrived at Kansas City, Mo. 1/10/19

Yards	Height	Age	Complex	Head	Hair	Whiskers	Voice	Forehead	Complexion	Eyes	Nose	Mouth	Chin	Stature	Mark
130	5' 8"	35	Dark	Large	Black	None	Soft	High	Black	Dark	Small	Thin	None	5' 8"	None

Period of Gang Probation 6 Mths.

Station of Gang Kansas

Class C 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

Offenses & Sentences:

1891-1892

Confession of 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th

Embodied 3 April 8 871 Chargeable Sec 1

Remarks:

Not to be taken as a recommendation  
for the sake of the offender's  
family or friends. Name of the  
prisoner is not to be given.

ABOVE: Emily's Conduct Record & Pardon. (View sideways)

## LIFE AFTER THE FIRES OF CHATHAM

The end of the Witheridge era within the bounds of the  
Hundred of Chatham

by John Witheridge

The Witheridges of Chatham suffered, as did many, from the "Dreadful Fire of Chatham", 1820, but not as much as those who lost their homes and belongings, but as result off an indirect course of events which started with the fire.

I have been reading many documents and it seems hundreds of books concerning life in the town of Chatham, both before the fires of 1800 and 1820, and afterwards. One such set of books, a set of four copied out and printed from the original longhand sheets of manuscript, written by a Mr. Saunders, concerns itself with the business premises of Chatham High Street. The area known as 'Rochester Extra' is covered in editions one and two, both covering the west end of Chatham High Street. Edition one covers the north side of the road, and edition two the south side. The author studied the area extensively, including all documents, deeds, leases, Trade Journals, etc., concerning the owners of these properties and those who held leases to them. Mr. Saunders has made up a very comprehensive list of all owners of each property from the late 1830s until the time of his survey in the 1950s.

Even though our Henry and William Witheridge, heroes of the fire, are not listed I have been able to put together quite a few facts that make interesting reading.

I ask you to refer to the plans of Chatham High Street which indicate the fire damage in 1820. These are in the Witheridge Times, Spring 1994, Volume 8, Number 1. The properties numbered 7 through to 16, all belonged to a James Best, Esquire. It is possible that the numbers 6, 17, 18 and 19 also belonged to this gentleman, but we are only interested in number 7, marked on the plan 'Henry's dwelling and shop'. (Henry Witheridge) This site is now known as 68 High Street. This property could not have been badly damaged in the fire because it continued to house the wrought iron works as it did in the days of William Witheridge, born 1729 (High Constable 1772) , and indeed even before his father William, born 1694, bought the business from its previous owner, William Austen, some time before 1739.



In the late 1830s the property was occupied by a Mr. C. Hillier, and later, in 1890, Mr. E. Page was the occupier. It was still a wrought iron business.

It seems that the fire of 1820 was the beginning of the end for the Best empire. Some properties were sold to pay for the re-building of those razed to the ground, and so by the 1830s Best's little empire had a new owners - Messrs. Winch and Style. Whether this was because the re-building of his property became too great a burden, or whether James Best died, is not known, but the whole set of properties, and the Best Breweries were sold, lock, stock and barrel.

Many years later No. 68 High Street took on a new lease of life. The old workshops were torn down and a magnificent auditorium, to be known as 'The Theatre Royal' was built. (Please note the drawing of this fine building). It was owned and directed by the famous Barnard family (C. and L.B. Barnard) who also owned the equally famous Barnard's Theatre of Varieties. The Theatre Royal is still standing to this very day. It is a sad reminder of a Grade I listed property that needs renovation, but to what end? Can it be viable if restored to its former glories, or should it be demolished and its existence left to memory? I wonder what Henry Witheridge would have advised? After all, this parcel of ground was the wealth and strength of the Chatham Witheridge family for a century.

I have just written a letter to the last remaining descendant of the Barnard family, who is, along with many local residents, trying to force the Chatham Council to make a preservation order to enable the Theatre Royal to be restored. In fact I may join forces with the action group myself.

Henry's brother, William, lived across the road at No. 96 High Street, Chatham. It is hard to say if William leased the whole property and rented out rooms, or if he was just a tenant of one of the rooms himself, but as he was actually mentioned in the report about the properties damaged in the fire, it can be safely assumed that he held the lease of the building which was situated on the corner of the High Street and a parade of shops. This was originally called 'Higgins Road' later to be known as 'Old Alley', and at one time 'Jaspers Alley'.

The approach to William's property, and indeed the whole alley (nowadays it would be called a 'shopping mall') was open only to pedestrians - no horse drawn traffic of any kind.

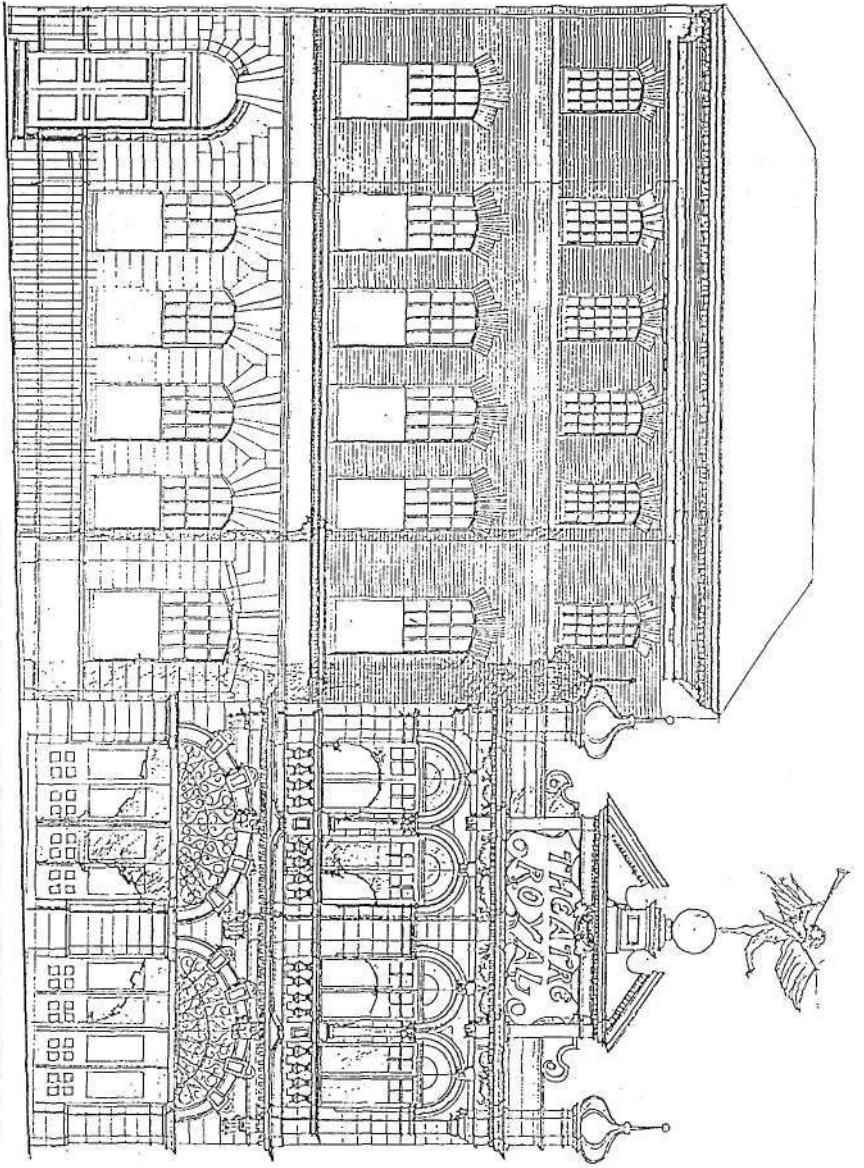
In fact the area was set apart from the rest of the High Street by a raised pavement known as 'the broad pavement'. This pavement was the meeting place for the theatricals, actors, and actresses to promenade when their talents were not being required in the various theatres and music halls of the Chatham entertainment fraternities.

I do feel that William was indeed a theatrical landlord and that he leased the property for this occupation from the owners, Watts Charities, which was a Charity of very honourable reputation and of an equally long standing position in the Medway towns. The Charity owned properties, and leased them to pay for the charitable work they undertook. As far as I can ascertain they have been in existence for over seven hundred years, and William would have had to be of unblemished character to be accepted as a tenant. It is my calculated assumption from the evidence in front of me that William could have rubbed shoulders with the best of the British stage acts. But I could be wrong!

Slowly, I am building up a picture of the final days of the Witheridge family within the town of Chatham. I hope that I will be able to write several more episodes before finally presenting you with the complete Witheridge family tree, plus my final report. The actors in this story you have met before. Who are they? All will be revealed to you soon. Join their brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents in the report you will not wish to miss.

(Footnote - some further notes that will be of interest to some Witheridge members - The Mills family owned a Fishmonger's business at 304, High Street, Chatham.

Mr. Lund, the Tobacconist and Newsagent of Railway Street, Chatham sold his business to one of the big retail outlets from the High Street, in 1924)



**THEATRE ROYAL CHATHAM**

The Witheridge Wrought Iron Works previously stood on this site.

## LIFE STORY

by Kim Cook

(This article was originally written early in 1980, shortly before the eighth birthday of Kim's younger son, Adam. It was first published in the Journal of the East Surrey Family History Society, Volume 3, No. 1. March 1980. However, the thoughts expressed then have a continuing relevance to anyone interested in discovering their family history.)

It's funny how the oddest things can trigger off memories of the past. A few weeks ago my younger son Adam was reading from a book of nonsense verse when he suddenly sang out "Who, when, where, why or what?" It turned out to be the last line of a poem in his book, but it took me back over twenty-five years to an English Grammar lesson, when we were taught to apply these five questions to sentence analysis. I can't remember much of the lesson, except chanting the five questions. Later on, two further questions were added to the list: How? (which I seem to remember was the key to finding adverbs!), and To Whom?

Many years later at college, the same string of questions was hammered home to a class full of aspiring journalists. "Make sure you ask all the right questions", we were told, "and always check your facts!". To this was added the final injunction that we must always check on the consequences. Even those least welcome of journalistic assignments, court reporting and council meetings, all had to be subjected to the same careful scrutiny. Who did it? Why, and when, and where and how? And what was the outcome? Our reporting had to be thorough.

But those lessons were invaluable, for I now find myself using the same techniques in my family history. Basic genealogy demands a knowledge of who our ancestors were and when they lived, but a string of names and dates is, to me, just a jumping off point. I want to know so much more about these people of the past. Where did they live? What did they do, both at work and in any leisure time they may have had? And why did they do it? How did they organise their work, their travel and their domestic details. To whom did they turn for help in times of need? And what result did their actions (or lack of them) have upon their own lives and those of their descendants? For each and every one of our ancestors we should aim, like good reporters, to be thorough, for only this way does the full picture emerge.

I've still a very long way to go before these questions are answered to even half my known ancestors, but applying them has taught me so much.

For instance, none of my relations knew anything of the circumstances in which our Witheridge family had moved to London from Devon, and I could just have glossed over the move in my family history notes. But training (and curiosity!) will out, and I found myself asking all those questions.

The answers were most illuminating. The answer to 'who?' turned out to be my great grandfather Edmund (born 1849), his wife Prudence and their two sons William and Edmund. The 'where?' was from Plymouth to London, and the 'when?' was 3rd September, 1883. I was very lucky to find the exact date inscribed on a clock given to Edmund as a farewell present by fellow-members of the International Order of Good Templars.

But it was the 'why?' that was most revealing - he had been offered a job. Researching the background details of the company he left and the one that enticed him away, revealed a fascinating story.

A penniless orphan, Edmund had been apprenticed at a very young age to the West of England Paper Staining Company in Plymouth. He combined a natural artistic flair with an instinctive business acumen and a great deal of hard work, and by the time he was in his early thirties he had risen to the rank of factory manager. In his managerial capacity he had to deal with representatives of the major wallpaper dealers in London, and it was one of these, Osborn and Sherman, which offered him a job.

Once in London, in a more junior post, he again worked his way up to become manager and bought shares in the company. Later he had the bright idea of forming a consortium of manufacturers. That consortium (Wall Paper Manufacturers, now known as WPM) still exists today. Sadly, the fortune it brought Edmund has long since gone!

I still don't know how the family travelled. Did they travel from Plymouth to London by train, or by some other means? Could they even have taken a coaster from Plymouth to the London docks. There are some fascinating avenues of research still to be followed.

And what of the nonsense poem that set me off along this train of thought in the first place? Intrigued by that last line, I borrowed Adam's book and found the poem. By one of those odd quirks of coincidence, it turned out to be amazingly relevant.

Called 'Life Story', it is reproduced below. However I prefer an alternative title, 'The Lazy Researcher's Lament'. I just hope it doesn't apply to any of us!

Life Story, or The Lazy Researcher's Lament (Anon)

Once (but no matter when)  
There lived (no matter where)  
A man, whose name - but then  
I need not that declare.

He - well he had been born,  
And so he was alive;  
His age ( I details scorn)  
Was somethingty and five.

He lived - how many years  
I truly can't decide;  
But this one fact appears,  
He lived - until he died.

'He died' I have averred,  
But cannot prove 'twas so,  
But that he was interred  
At any rate, I know.

I fancy he'd a son;  
I hear he had a wife.  
Perhaps he'd more than one!  
I know not, on my life!

But whether he was rich,  
Or whether he was poor,  
Or neither, both or which,  
I cannot say, I'm sure.

I can't recall his name,  
Or what he used to do,  
But then - well such is fame!  
'Twill so serve me and you.

And that is why I thus  
About this unknown man  
Would fain create a fuss,  
To rescue, if I can

From dark oblivion's blow.  
Some record of his lot;  
But ah! I do not know  
Who, where, when, why or what?

NEW/OLD NAMES FOR WITHERIDGES

by John Witheridge

You may remember at this year's re-union and Annual General Meeting, that a very close colleague of mine, Mr. Ernest Hamley attended, and entered into the full spirit of the meeting, adding his comments and suggestions as the day proceeded.

Ernest and I have pooled our resources in the field of research. This is one of the primary agreements and requirements of being a member of the Council of Family Societies. The following is the result of this close co-operation between societies. Through being allowed to view all the "W" indexes of the new 1992 IGI, I have been able to find many items unknown to us before, thus being able to add many names to our original listings. Some of these variations of our family name are unbelievable, but nevertheless they are our name, in the variant that was transcribed by the hand of many different clerks of many different parishes.

Many of these strange sounding variants would be the result of the not so local untrained ear of the Clerk when signing the certificates, attempting to understand the dialect and the spoken word of bridegrooms and parents. Whatever the reason, we must say a very deep and sincere "thank you" to the Church of the Latter Day Saints for this, their second International Genealogical Index. We acknowledge that there are bound to be mistakes, because the original collators were just ordinary people who were prone to the same eye strain as we ourselves suffer when reading Parish records.

Just read on and marvel at what might have been missed for ever.

Witheridge, Chorles and Jaone Hosband or Hosaand 01 Apr.1700  
Hartland

This next item could be the same marriage but with a variation in spelling, but note the different date.

Wootheridge, Chorls & June Husband 15 Apr. 1700 Hartland

Wootheridge, Grace of Charles Wootheridge 23 Jan 1701  
Hartland

Wootheridge, Mary of Charles Wootheridge 22 Oct 1706  
Hartland

Widridge, Gerison and Eme Davie 03 Feb 1595 Roberorough

Weatheridge, Agnes of Elizabeth Wea; 26 Oct 1766 South Huish  
Weetheridge, Agnes of Pall Weetheridge 17 Aug 1679 " "  
Weatheridg, Christopher & Juliane Kingcombe 16 Jan 1682  
Newton Ferrers  
Wetherig, Eliz and John Trust 11 Nov 1724 Kingston near  
Ivybridge  
Wetherige, Grace of Thomas and Mary 23 May 1751 Bradworthy  
Weatheridg, Mary & Wm. Pearce 15 Mar 1652 Kingston near  
Ivybridge  
Weatheridg, Mary & Richard Cole 19.Jul 1692 Ugborough  
Whetheridg, Mary of Thomas and Mary Dec 1754 Bradworthy  
Wetherage, Mary & Richard Cotton 11 Aug 1776 Holsworthy  
Wetheridge, Mary and Edward Adams 13 Oct 1830 Brixton All  
Saints  
Weatheridge, Parnella & Thomas Foard 13 Apr. 1689  
Newton Ferrers  
Weatheridg, Richord & Francis Edgecombe 12 Nov 1652  
Kingston near Ivybridge  
Weitheridg, Susanna and William Bush 11 Feb 1677  
Newton Ferrers  
Whetheradge, Thomas of Thomas Whe; 24 Feb 1698 Bradworthy  
Weatherage, William of Walter Weath; 3 Mar 1694 South  
Huish

Some of these names are known to us in other spellings, but is always makes me smile as I remember a statement I made to some one enquiring how many variants of the Witheridge name there are. I answered that we were not so very far behind the famous Heinz and their 57 Varieties, for it always seems as though our name can be spelt and pronounced in endless forms. As long as there are a few consonants - W T H G D the vowels can be permutated in any way you wish, and you will still have a variant of Witheridge.

#### NEW MEMBERS

121 Mrs. Jenny Witheridge. Details as per member No.96.  
Mr. Mark Witheridge of the Ermington family. The Membership Secretary apologises for not having allocated a membership number to Jenny from the date of her marriage to Mark.



NEW MEMBERS

119 Mrs. Catherine Spina née Witheridge  
120 Mr. Tony Spina  
122 Mr. Philip Spina  
41 Bloomfield Drive, London, Ontario, N6G 1P2 Canada  
(1) Catherine Spina nee Witheridge 1959 - (2) George  
Gordon Witheridge ( ) (3) Audrey O'Brien ( )  
(4) George Herbert Witheridge 1885 - (5) Mary Etta  
Blue ( ) (8) George Witheridge 1846-1916 (9) Susan  
McWaters 1845-1934 (16) George Witheridge 1808-1884  
(17) Mary Saunders 1815-1902 (18) John McWaters ( )  
(19) Susanna Johnston ( )  
Milton Damerel/Bradworthy 1808-1840 Ontario and Toronto  
Canada 1840- present day. Further dates will be added when  
we receive more data.

WILLS AND PROBATE (from data supplied by Velma Metcalfe, New  
Zealand, and forwarded by John Witheridge)

Probate Index Supreme Court, New South Wales, Australia

Witheridge, Thomas No. 80213 series 4 Residence Greenwell  
Point Nowra. Died 3 March 1917 instrument, Probate.

Witheridge, Annie Elizabeth No. 110710 Residence Campsie,  
died 11 Oct. 1921 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Philemon No. 346973 Residence Greenwell Point,  
died 8 July, 1948 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Joseph No. 4224 Residence Bateman Bay, died 25  
July, 1954 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Samuel No. 515235 Residence Brighton le Sands,  
died 22 July 1960 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Elizabeth Mary No. 533922 Residence Brighton le  
Sands, died 25 August 1961 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, William No. 552179 Residence Terara ? died 25  
August 1962 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Maud No. 620138 Residence Kingsford, died 21  
June 1966 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Douglas Norman No. 668860 Residence Paddington,  
died 13 May 1968 instrument Probate.

Witheridge, Edward Albert No. 6700912 Residence Croydon  
Park, died 25 January 1969 instrument Probate.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE SOCIETY SHOULD BE  
PAID TO THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

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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,  
New Members Secretary,  
Miss Valerie Bluett,  
63 Old Laira Road,  
Laira,  
Plymouth  
Devon PL3 6BL (Tel.No. 0752-662985)

Society of Genealogists,  
14 Charterhouse Buildings,  
Goswell Road,  
London EC1M 7BA (Tel.No. 071-251 6799)

