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**THE WITHERIDGE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

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SPRING 2004

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Honorary Life President	Mrs Kim Cook Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road Tenterden Kent. TN30 6NS
Honorary Life Vice President	The Rev David E Witheridge 2425 Irving Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minn 55405. USA
Honorary Life Vice President	Mrs Joyce Browne 5 Greenhill Avenue, Luton Bedfordshire LU2 7DN
Chairman	Mr David Witheridge 70 Copse Road Plympton Devon PL7 3QB
Membership Secretary	Mr Richard Witheridge 16 Haven Close Dunster Minehead. Somerset TA24 6RW.
(to be sent all new applications and all renewals of Society membership, complete with subscriptions).	
Treasurer	Mr Richard Witheridge Address as above.
Assistant Treasurer	Mrs Maureen Witheridge Address as Treasurer.
Research Coordinator and Assistant Editor.	Mrs Kim Cook Address as above.
Editor	Mr Richard Witheridge Address as above
(to be sent all items for publication in the Witheridge Times, Family news, articles etc.)	
Secretary	Mrs Barbara Finemore 1 Corfe Avenue Hartley Vale Plymouth. Devon. PL3 5SQ.
Publisher and Distributer	To be decided
(Continued on the inside of the back cover)	



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<http://www.WitheridgeFHS.com>

EDITORIAL

Christmas has come and gone. We hope you all had an enjoyable time with plenty to eat and drink.

For Maureen and myself we were both suffering heavy colds and Maureen's turned to bronchitis all of which tended to spoil our Christmas and meant having to put off visits from the family. However we are now fully recovered.

Weather wise we have not had any real cold winter spells to kill off the bugs in fact here in Dunster we have had plenty of sunshine although sometimes quite cold with it. We have just received sad news that one of our later members, Joan Solly, who lived at Tavistock, has passed away. You will see this in the family news.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just another reminder that subscriptions for the year are now due and should be sent to the Membership Secretary. The amounts due are shown on the inside of the back cover.

FAMILY NEWS.

Christmas and the New Year brought us greetings from around the world, and it was so good to hear from our Witheridge families. **Judith** and **Allan Witheridge** of Australia gave us news of 'The Figtree Witheridges'. They had some lovely trips during 2003, some of the places visited have familiar names like 'Tamworth' and 'Milton' and Judith and Allan visited lovely gardens during a 'Daffodil Stroll'. The names sound very English, but I guess that is where the similarity ends. Their children and grandchildren are all doing very well, both in careers and in health, and we hope that the blessings continue in 2004.

Velma and **Rodney Metcalfe** of Tawa, New Zealand had a very busy year - in Velma's words "work has been relentless" - Rodney's shift at a news agency at Public Radio begins at 5. 0 A.M.! It was rather a sad year for Rodney, with some deaths in his family. On the plus side Rodney's diabetes is responding well to medication, and Velma's vocal condition has improved. Velma and Rodney celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary in the Mediterranean climate of Hawkes Bay, and they now feel ready for the coming year. Congratulations, Velma and Rodney, on your anniversary, and we send our hopes for a good 2004.

In a letter just received from Velma she tells us that her brother in law, Andrew Gaylard, husband of her sister June, both members of the Society, suffered a mild heart attack on Christmas morning. Andrew is recovering in hospital, but as he already has a kidney problem, treatment has to be undertaken cautiously. We send our good wishes to June and Andrew with hopes for a speedy recovery.

Pat and **John James** of Vancouver sent a very thoughtful Christmas message, reflecting on the precious gift of Time. They are grateful for time to be with their family, who are doing well and for the time spent travelling. In 2003 they visited

Europe and saw the contrast between the natural beauty of the Balkan states and the unnatural ugliness and devastation resulting from war.

Brenda and Bill Dwyne of Ontario, Canada, tell us that their children are all doing well. Two of them are in university and their eldest daughter, Erin, has her Masters Degree in history, and is taking some time out from education to work. It was an alarming year for Canadians - with the Sars illness breaking out, mad cow disease appearing, and West Nile fever, but Brenda says that she and Bill are enjoying their retirement.

Nearer to home, **Brenda and Ron Dixon**, with whom we spent the 2003 Re-union, became the grandparents of a baby boy - their daughter Sarah giving birth on the 19th October, 2003 to Hayden Richard.

Kim and Roy Cook became grandparents for the second time. Lauren Kimberly Cook, daughter of Jason and Zoe, was born on the 5th December, 2003.. After some early problems she is now doing well. Congratulations to both the parents.

In spite of some health problems, Kim set up her own family history business - Orchard Research and Publishing. I am sure that we shall hear more of that.

Dorothy Witheridge in Australia sent Christmas greetings from OZ. She congratulated the Brits on winning the Rugby World cup.

They held their Witheridge Picnic at Cateract Dam, but not so well attended as some years, only thirteen. A bit like ours sometimes!. Photograph of their gathering is shown below.

Dorothy's son Grant returns to Brisbane after staying with her for 6 months, understandably she will miss him. Another son Brad goes to Germany, then UK then back to Germany. His wife Robyn and two year old son Saxon are near so Dorothy has the pleasure of looking after Saxon on Tuesdays.

Tony is still in America. Dorothy has a daughter Kerry who lives in Queensland.

To all those on the old branches, and all the new sprigs on our family tree, we send our love and good wishes for 2004.

Thank Dorothy for keeping us up to date with the Australian Family. ED.

SAD NEWS.

We are sorry to have had news of the death of member **Mrs. Joan Solly**, who joined the Society in 2002. Her husband tells us that she died of cancer in January, 2004. Joan was of the Kent, London, Birmingham family, and we have been trying to find out more about this family in recent weeks.

We have not been able to meet Joan and her husband, but, as they lived in Tavistock, where we are holding the re-union of 2004, we had hoped to remedy this shortly. We hope that it may be that Joan's husband will feel able to come to the re-union, so that we can make his acquaintance. Meanwhile we send our sympathy and condolences to the family.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Carolyn Green has informed me that she is now living in France. Her new address is

8 Rue du Mars, Le Mars, 17240 CLION SUR SEUGNE. France. Also her e mail address is now carolyngreen@wanadoo.fr

CHANGE OF ADDRESS CONT'D.

Amanda Witheridge has also changed her address and now lives at:-
158 Barkly Street, Mornington 3931, Victoria, Australia. Her e mail address is cleomaxi@iprimus.com.au

Hope you both enjoy your new homes. ED

AUSTRALIAN REUNION HELD IN OCTOBER 2003



Front row

Bill, Jack, Rita, Shirley Noad, Dorothy, Jennifer Woolcott and mother Margaret Woolcott.

Back row

Allan, Karen with husband Greig behind (Allan and Judith's son), Bob Noad and Judith

Note

Shirley Noad is Matha Witheridge's granddaughter. 1879-1967.

We recognise Dorothy and Allan and Judith from the 1997 reunion at Tiverton. ED

GRANDFATHER'S CHISEL

by Joyce Browne

Not an artifact to provoke emotion, one might think - but this chisel is different. As chisels go it is quite handsome. It has a nicely turned eight sided handle, probably polished boxwood, and a steel blade about four inches long, which has seen a lot of wear. This is not surprising since this tool is well over a hundred years old.

What makes it different? It belonged to my Grandfather, Francis Robert Witheridge, and it has 'F.R. WITHERIDGE' stamped on three sides of the handle. Francis Robert was born in 1856 in Winton, Bournemouth, the son of Robert Witheridge and Emma Shepherd, and he was a carpenter, following in the family tradition of his father, grandfather, and great grandfather - Arthur Witheridge of Ermington.

Francis, or 'Frank', died young at the age of 45 in 1899. His son, my father Arthur Harry, was a child at the time and did not really remember him. It was this lack of knowledge of the family whose name I bore which started me off on my quest for family history. My father and his sisters did not bear a facial resemblance to one another. There was some resemblance to their mother - who was a 'Curtis'- but I wanted to know what the Witheridges looked like.

In all the years of searching, I have never come across a picture, a photograph, or anyone who knew anything about my grandfather. How then, do I now have his chisel?

It has come to me through a sad event. In September last my cousin Bob Thomas, who lived in the Isle of Man, died. He was well known on the Island, and in wider circles among the Vintage Car and Motor Cycle fraternity. The historic house in which he lived, Milntown, has been left to the Manx nation, and his collection of vintage cars and motor cycles are to remain there and they are open to the public. Our member Dorothy Linter, Bob's niece, asked me if I would like some small memento.

I remembered a conversation I once had with Bob in which we bemoaned our lack of family documentation, but he said that he still had a chisel which had belonged to our grandfather, which had his initials stamped on it. Bob still used it.

From a house full of antiques, workshops full of tools, Dorothy has retrieved the chisel and given it to me.

This tool, which came to Bob through his mother Ada Witheridge, travelled with his family from Bournemouth to London, to Luton when his father George had a job in

Luton, back to London, to Middlesex, to Bicester, to the Isle of Man and now back to Luton.

I have no documents, no letters, no portrait, no photographs of my grandfather, but I have a tool which has been in constant use, and which he held in his hands and used to provide for his family. An excuse for a bit of emotion I think!

Some time ago Bob also wrote an article for the Magazine about this chisel. Vol 5 No 3. ED.

WITHERIDGE NAME UP IN LIGHTS.

Letter from Annette Witheridge in the USA tells me that she has recently attended a theatre play called **Bed and Breakfast** in which one of the characters is called **Witheridge**. As Annette puts it the name Witheridge has been immortalised. The play has been produced by a New York Playwright, Richard **Lay**, who originated from Devon. I think the name Ley crops up somewhere in one of our family trees maybe this is one of the variants!. Knowing Annettes interest in the Witheridge name he called the central character Witheridge.

FAMILY TREE ERROR.

Our new member Valerie Wells has informed us that on the information shown in the last magazine her father should have been shown as Frederick Stanley John Northmore and not just John. We are still checking our records and will be printing the family tree as soon as our researchers have made the corrections. Thanks Valerie for pointing this out.

2004 REUNION and AGM REMINDER

The next Reunion and AGM will take place at Tavistock Town Hall on Saturday 22nd May 2004. The programme for the day is as follows:-
We will meet in the RUNDLE room and entrance to this room will be via the Right Hand door when looking at the front of the Town Hall. See diagram below.

10.00 am Meet in Rundle room for tea/coffee.

11.00 am Annual General meeting.

12.30 pm Buffet lunch.

2.00pm Informal discussion and a question and answer time.

3.00 pm Refreshments.

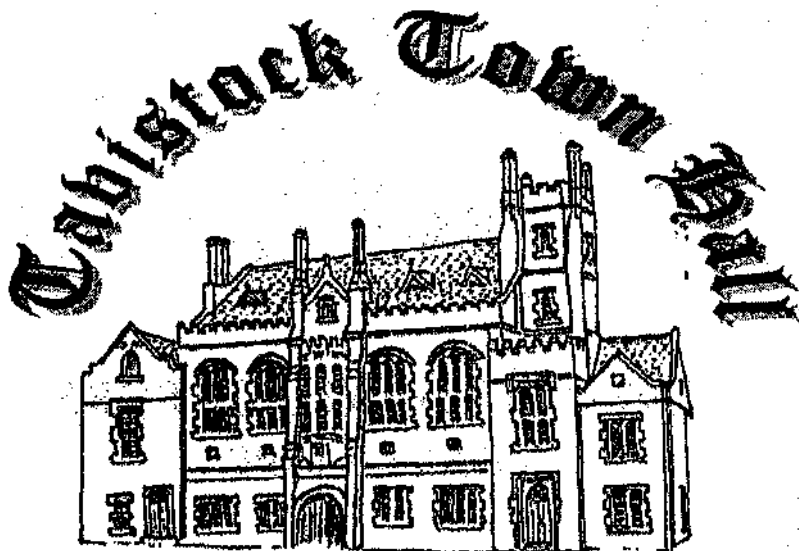
3.45 pm View exhibits around the hall etc.

5.00 pm Closing speech by President.

Note. All members are invited to bring along their family trees or other items of family interest and exhibit them around the hall. Note no nails or sticky tape to be affixed to the hall furniture please.

Sunday 23rd May it is hoped that we can visit Morwellham Quay using cars available. This should be a full day out.

Richard will need to be advised on who will attend and whether tea/coffee and lunch is required.



↑
Entrance

Go up the stairs, diagonally across the large room, up more stairs to the RUNDLE ROOM.

Tea and Coffee will be free for the morning and afternoon servings, but we will need to make a charge for the lunchtime buffet which will be in the order of £5.0 per person and will consist of a finger buffet with Quiche, Sandwiches, Cakes and Tea/coffee.

MAGAZINE BACK NUMBERS

Richard currently holds a number of back copies of the magazine and can supply these at modest price, Funds to Witheridge Family History Society.

THE WITHERIDGE WHO WASN'T

by Joyce Browne

In 1993, Velma Metcalfe, of Tawa New Zealand, found the death certificate of a **John Witheridge** who died in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1916.

From the certificate:

Name:	John Witheridge	Occupation:	Seaman
Date of death	13 th September, 1916	Age:	72 years
Cause of death:	Enlargement of prostate. Some exhaustion after operation.		
Residence:	Stafford St., Dunedin	To whom married:	Unmarried
Names of mother and father:	Unknown	Where born:	U.S. America
Length of time in New Zealand:	30 years		

Velma was intrigued as all the Witheridge names on New Zealand death certificates from 1865 to 1920 were known to her - except this one. She began to investigate, and when she wrote her article "John Witheridge - a Seaman" which appeared in the Witheridge Times of Winter, 1994, she knew quite a lot about John Witheridge.

She found that he had been a quartermaster on board the SS Mararoa, a prestigious ship built in 1885 as a passenger vessel, which changed its use after its first voyage to that of a carrier of mail between San Francisco, Auckland New Zealand, and Sydney, Australia. Could it have been that John Witheridge joined the ship in San Francisco?

John James of Vancouver, Kathy Witheridge of Ontario and Dorothy Witheridge of Australia all helped to research information on the Union Steamship Company, owners of the SS Mararoa, but the name of John Witheridge could not be found except for one reference to him as an Able Seaman on board in 1910.

It surprised Velma to find his name on an electoral roll for Port Chalmers, near Dunedin, for the year 1890. As a citizen of the United States, John would not be eligible to vote. This led to the thought that he might be English after all, but no birth record could be found in England.

Velma found the address where he lived, and she found his grave, with a simple headstone, and she found his Will. This provided an even greater surprise - "This is the last Will and Testament of me - John Witheridge - (Sometimes known as **John Pengeley Bussell**). It was signed 'John Witheridge'.

One friend and beneficiary, a George Wilson, said that he thought that John was born in London.

As a result of this information I went to the General Record Office in London and searched the birth records for six years around a date of 1844, a probable date for

birth, given the age at death as 73 years. I found nothing for Pengelly/Bussell/Witheridge.

The name Bussell was not strange to us as for years we had been researching the family of Mary Ann Bussell and George Causey Witheridge, with varying degrees of success. We speculated that maybe John Pengelly Bussell was a brother of Mary Ann, and had lived with her and George in London. Mary Ann and George had visited America, and were there in 1863 and 1865, where two of their children were born. Our difficulty was that we could not find the early history of Mary Ann, and could not find her or her family on the census of 1851, before she married George Witheridge. We had to leave the enquiry into John Pengelly Bussell Witheridge, although we have never stopped looking for Mary Ann.

Then one of those rays of good fortune shone on our investigations! Kim Cook was searching a birth register on the Internet when she came across the name **John Pengilly Bussell**, the year was 1849 and the place of birth Bideford, Devon. This just had to be our John, and Kim sent for the certificate.

The certificate (entry No. 1128) revealed that John Pengilly Bussell was born at Higher Gunstone, Bideford, on the 30th April, 1849. His mother was Mary Ann Bussell. No occupation was shown and the space for the father's name was blank. This shows that John was five years younger than we thought.

We asked Sheila Jewell if she would look into the Bideford records in an endeavour to find a father's name, but there were no relevant records available from Bideford, but Sheila did find the Baptismal Record for John, son of Mary Ann Bussell - 'Spinster', in the Parish Church of Bideford, on the 10th June, 1849. Entry No. 1173. It is likely that John's father was a Pengelly, but we have no confirmation of this.

It is unlikely that George Witheridge was his father as George was only thirteen years of age when John was born, although the Witheridge family was living at Higher Gunstone, Bideford, at the time, and Higher Gunstone was a small district.

Sharp-eyed Sheila also spotted something else that we had missed. On the census for 1851, in Higher Gunstone, she found an entry for a William Pitt, aged 59, Widower, Head of Household, a gardener. In the house was a visitor - Mary Ann **Burnell**, aged 22, a dressmaker, born Cullompton, and a son of visitor aged 2 years- John **Burnell**, born Bideford. I don't think that we are stretching credibility too far to think that 'Burnell' is a mistranscription or a mis-hearing of 'Bussell'.

We have never before been able to establish a place of birth for Mary Ann, or that she ever lived at Higher Gunstone, and this gives us a clue as to how Mary Ann met George Causey Witheridge.

We know that by 1857 George Witheridge was living in London, and that in 1858 the first child of Mary Ann and George was born in Marylebone. John Pengelly Bussell would have been about nine years old at that time, and presumably would still have been living with his mother. By 1863, when John was 14, Mary Ann and George were in America, where their third child, Frances, was born. It is likely that they went to

America earlier than that as we have failed to find a birth certificate in England for their second child, Jack, who was born circa 1860. John Pengelly Bussell would have been 11 years old at that time, and likely to have still been with his mother and George.

By 1867 Mary Ann and George were back in London, where their child Emily was born. Did John choose to stay in America, and possibly begin his career as a seaman?

We have many questions surrounding Mary Ann and George Witheridge. It is possible that they were never actually married - but that is another story.

Mary Ann Bussell Witheridge died in the Infirmary, St. Pancras, London, on the 4th October, 1910, aged 82 years, only six years before her son John Pengelly. Did John ever see his mother after she left America? The informant of her death was her son, George. She was described as a 'Widow', George Witheridge having died in 1901 as the result of an accident.

Obviously it would have been convenient for Mary Ann and George to call her son 'Witheridge' when he was a boy, and he chose to keep that name.

We now know that the seaman who died in Dunedin in 1916 was John Pengelly Bussell - Witheridge he wasn't.

NEW MEMBERS

Members Nos. 195
196

Mr. Paul Raymond Witheridge
Mrs. Beryl Margaret Witheridge

1 Ragmans Close,
Marlow Bottom,
Marlow, Bucks.
SL7 3QW
Tel: 01628 484026 e-mail paul@witheridge.net

We are happy to welcome Paul and Beryl to the Witheridge Family History Society. Readers may be forgiven if they think that we have already welcomed Paul, as he has a name sake in our member Paul Witheridge of Ontario, and it is through Paul and Kathy that Paul Raymond has made contact with us.

Paul is descended from what we have called the Tomes/Newton Abbott and Woodleigh family, some of whose members have moved from Devon to Oxfordshire, Bucks., Bournemouth and Poole, Dorset. (Not the first Witheridge family to move from Devon to the Poole area)

Over the years we have taken much interest in this family, and we hope that Paul's association with us will be useful and helpful to him and Beryl.

(1) Paul Raymond **Witheridge** (2) Raymond Arthur Edwin **Witheridge** 1920 -

- (3) Kathleen May **Collett** 1916 - 1998 (4) Arthur **Witheridge** 1885 - 1960
(5) Florence Rose Filer **Rugg** 1889 - 1977 (6) Robert **Collett** (7) Kate **Dewe**
(8) James **Witheridge** 1845-1918 (9) Hannah **German** c. 1851 - 1912
(10) Edwin **Rugg** (16) **William Witheridge** c. 1804 - 1890 (17) Susan **Brimmicombe**
c. 1805 - 1890 (32) John **Witheridge** c. 1760 - ? (33) Jane **Entmett**
-

Paul and Beryl met with Paul and Kathy Witheridge whilst on holiday in Canada and Kathy has sent me a Photograph of their meeting. Hope they will not mind me printing a copy here so that members will recognise them when they attend the Tavistock meeting in May.



Thanks Kathy for sending the photograph to us. ED

We also welcome **Jeff Bassett** to the Witheridge Family History Society and hope to meet him at Tavistock in May. Hope you will gain a lot of information and find relatives by joining us Jeff.

We will try to get your family information and tree in the next magazine, but unfortunately information came too late to be in this edition.

We are still working on an update of the Ermington family tree, promised in our last edition, and hope to have this ready soon.

DESKTOP DETECTIVE

Discovering the Descendants of Benetta - Part 1

Kim Cook sheds light on the Witheridge Dold family in South Africa

The name Benetta given to children from the Yealmpton branch of the Witheridge family has long fascinated me. It's been spelled in various ways, but for simplicity I'll stick to Benetta.

Until now the first known uses were Benetta Ann (1846) and Caroline Benetta (1849), both grandchildren of William and Mary Witheridge, and great-grandchildren of Walter Witheridge and Elizabeth nee Sears. It was thought that this unusual name probably derived from the surname Bennett, and I wondered which of the women who married into the family might have had this surname. So far the source has eluded us - and still does.

Now I've discovered an earlier use of the name Benetta and, in the process, may have solved the mystery of what happened to James, the brother of Walter. I've also discovered information that may lead us to dozens of Witheridge descendants in South Africa and to a tragedy that wiped out one family in a day.

Putting together the research has been both time-consuming and fascinating. Initially, much of the information came from family group details on the IGI provided by various members of the LDS church. These listings included some details that were obviously guesswork, and others that were from very poorly transcribed documents. However, I was able to use even the inaccurate information as a springboard to research on other internet sites, and in particular some specialist South African ones. This information has proved far more accurate, and by combining information from a number of different sites, I've begun to build up an accurate picture of our South African family.

So who was the earlier Benetta, and why are her descendants in South Africa? The first reference I found to her was on the IGI listing for South Africa, where she is entered as Sarah Benetta Witheridge. The entry gives details of her marriage to John Matthew Dold at Grahamstown, South Africa on 4 July 1822. Her father's name is given as James Witheridge, and her age as 18, although other listings discovered later suggest she was younger. All the references to her after her marriage give her name as Benetta Sarah.

Without the use of the name Benetta, we'd have no idea where her father, James, came from, but the use of this rare name indicates that he was almost certainly the James born in Newton Ferrers in 1778, the youngest son of Walter and Elizabeth (née Boyes), and brother of the Walter who married Elizabeth Sears. As we have no knowledge of him in Devon after his birth, his possible appearance in South Africa doesn't clash with what we already know.

I already knew that a James Witheridge had married Sarah Hanner on 4 October 1803 at St Pancras Old Church in London. James and Sarah had a son, William Thomas, baptised on 1 January 1805 at St Andrew's, Holborn. However, I also knew that a James Witheridge of London was the father of Elisa

(b1833) and possibly also of James (b1837) and Caroline (b1842). Charles Wetheridge (b1848), who went on to found the prolific Camberwell family, was also the son of a James Witheridge. These four births between 1833 and 1848 were all in the Highgate area of London, so it seemed likely that they were members of the same family, and could possibly be descended from James and Sarah Hanner.

Finding James in South Africa puts these possibilities in a new light. Unless the James who went to South Africa left behind in England a son called James much older than Benetta (and so far we have no evidence of this) a link between the Highgate family and the James in South Africa now seems unlikely.

Given that Benetta was born in London c 1804-1806, and her first name was really Sarah, could Sarah Hanner have been her mother? It's a distinct possibility.

But how and why would a young girl of 18 have ended up half a world away from her London birthplace? I soon discovered that her husband's family also came from London and had emigrated at about the same time as Benetta.

Benetta's father-in-law was Matthew Dold. He and his wife Jane had seven children - John Matthew (1794), Catherine (1795), John Matthew (1797), Jane Catherine (1799), William Andrew (1800), Sarah Ann (1803), and Emma (1805). All were baptised at St Mary, Whitechapel, not so very far from where we believe the Witheridge family were living at that time.

Much later in my research, I found the names of James and Benetta, and the Dold family, on a couple of special sites dedicated to the Cape Colony settlers of 1820, and from one of these made contact with David Boardman of Wellington, NZ. David's ancestor, Rev William Charles Boardman, an Anglican clergyman, had been one of the 1820 Cape Colony settlers, and David has many reference books on the early settlers. He very kindly offered to run some checks for me on the various names involved. The information he has provided so far has been excellent, and I am extremely indebted to him for his help.

In 1820 the British government decided to sponsor some 4,000 people to emigrate and settle in Cape Colony, which was then little more than a series of small British military bases. The emigrants travelled in a fleet of seventeen ships which sailed from a number of ports between December 1819 and October 1820. The overall commander of this fleet was Captain Moresby of the *Menai*. Other ships included *Aurora*, *Belle Alliance*, *Brilliant* and *Weymouth*. Many of the 4,000 settlers came in large groups, some from specific religious denominations, others in groups with family or geographical links. James and Benetta Witheridge were part of a large group known as Sephton's party. This was a single-denomination group, its members all being Methodists, mostly from the Great Queen Street Methodist congregation in the Lincoln's Inn, Holborn, area of London. They were led by Hezekiah Sephton, a 43-year-old carpenter, who travelled with his wife Jane, also 43, and their family Thomas (18) also a carpenter, Hezekiah (12), Jane (11) and William (no age given). James Witheridge is listed as a bricklayer, aged 39, and Benetta Sarah's age is given as 13. There are no other Witheridges listed, so it looks as though James must have been a widower, with Benetta his only surviving child. The ages given are for the early part of 1820, which suggests that James was born in about 1780, and Benetta in about 1806. However, in 1822 Benetta's age at marriage is given as 18, which indicates an error somewhere. If Benetta's age is a couple of years out, perhaps James's is also. In any case, in those days an age difference (for an adult) of two years between one document and another is not uncommon, and this does at least confirm that James was in the right age range to be the one born in Newton Ferrers. The link with Holborn is also

interesting, as that is where William Thomas, son of James and Sarah Witheridge, had been baptised in 1805.

Sephton's party must have been a very large one, for it filled all the accommodation on the *Aurora*, and more! A sub-group, Gush's party, had to sail on the *Brilliant*. Both ships sailed from Gravesend, Kent, on 15 February 1820. They anchored in Simon's Bay (near Cape Town) on 2 May 1820, and finally reached Algoa Bay (where Port Elizabeth now stands) on 15 May 1820.

La Belle Alliance sailed on 12 February 1820, with Willson's party, led by Thomas Willson, an architect, with his wife and three small children. This group included William Charles Boardman, a 44-year-old clergyman and teacher, with his wife and eight children, and another clergyman, John Ayliff. Also in Willson's party were the Dold family, Matthew, a 50-year-old carpenter and his 46-year-old wife Jane, and their children John Matthew (22), Jane Catherine (20), William Andrew (19) and Sarah Ann (18). Both sons were also carpenters. From this it would seem that three of the children baptised in Whitechapel had died.

When Thomas Willson, the leader of this party, saw the raw African bush, hundreds of miles from a town of any size, he deserted his party, and William Charles Boardman took over as leader.

It was from this party that the first ever marriage among the new Cape Colony settlers took place, and it involved a woman who was to become Benetta Witheridge's sister-in-law. I first found a reference to it in the miscellaneous section of the IGI, which recorded a marriage at sea.

Further research revealed a romantic story. During the long voyage from England, Jane Dold and Rev John Ayliff had fallen in love. It is easy to imagine their moonlight strolls on deck, suitably chaperoned of course! Once ashore, they wanted to marry, and Matthew Dold had no objections, but there was nowhere at hand where they could legally be married.

Captain Moresby was now responsible for the safe disembarkation of the settlers. He was, by all accounts, a kind and caring man, concerned for the welfare of his charges and the great hardships they would face, particularly in the early days. He made sure they were accommodated in tents until the transport wagons were ready to take them to the Zuurveld, later renamed Albany District. When Captain Moresby saw the plight of John and Jane, he realised that, if he were three miles out at sea, he had the authority to marry the couple. So the wedding party left their tents, went aboard the *Menai*, and were then taken three miles off the coast for the marriage ceremony, before being brought back to their new homeland, legally married.

The early days were very hard. The settlers had arrived in autumn, not the best time of year to be starting a new life. Soon they moved inland from Algoa Bay and established various settlements, with many going to what is now Grahamstown.

Here James Witheridge, and others from Devon, must have felt a sense of homecoming, for the beautiful Kowie River is often compared to the Dart in South Devon.

The Kowie, which is tidal for over twenty miles and has a magnificent horseshoe bend in its upper reaches, winds through lush banks of vegetation, with masses of beautiful flowers in their seasons. The sight of banks of the Cape primrose (*streptocarpus rexii*), so like the English one, but with violet flowers, sometimes tinged with white, would have reminded them of spring flowers at home. The Cape

honeysuckle (*tecoma capensis*), a scrambling, evergreen shrub with tubular flowers in varying shades of yellow, peach and orange, growing profusely throughout the area, obviously brought to mind the honeysuckle of English hedgerows. New to them, but delightful, would have been the Cape leadwort (*plumbago auriculata*), a climbing shrub bearing clumps of tubular sky-blue flowers, and the Cape crane-flower (*strelitzia reginae*, also known as the bird of paradise plant) looking exotic with its green foliage tipped with orange or purple, and spiky flowers of orange, yellow and blue.

But in all this beautiful scenery, towns had to be built, with houses, schools, churches and shops. James Witheridge's bricklaying skills would have been put to good use, as would the carpentry skills of Matthew Dold and his sons John and William, as the building of Grahamstown went ahead. It was there in 1822 that two Dold weddings took place. John Dold married Benetta Witheridge and his sister Sarah Ann married James Howse, a 25-year-old labourer who also been part of Sephton's party on board the *Aurora*.

A search for the names Benetta and Dold found an entry that had not shown up on my Witheridge search, because the name had been spelled differently. On a site listing marriages by banns in South Africa it was recorded that on 4 July 1822 John Matthew Dold, age 24, a Protestant born in London, England, had married Benetta Weatheridge age 18, a Protestant, born in London, England. This entry, agreeing with the IGI one, again suggests that Benetta's age on the passenger list is incorrect, and should perhaps have been 15, making her date of birth about 1805.

Another IGI entry showed the marriage of John's younger brother, William Andrew, to Elizabeth James in 1835 in Grahamstown. The IGI has nearly 150 entries for Dolds in South Africa, many duplicated, some obviously guesswork. By checking against other information and analysing the results, I've confirmed many of the descendants of Benetta and John Dold, and also some of William and Elizabeth. It's amazing how often, among descendants of both these families, the names Benetta (sometimes shortened to Etta) and Witheridge crop up.

John and Benetta had eight children, three of whom died in infancy. The eldest was James, born on 12 December 1824, whom I believe was named after his grandfather, James Witheridge. Next came John, born on 25 January 1830, who died the following day. Their first daughter was Benetta Sarah, born on 17 January 1831. Then came another John (1832-1905), followed by Matthew, born on 6 December 1837, who lived for just four days, and Mary Ann, born on 12 December 1839, who died eight months later on 20 August 1840. The last two were another Matthew, born on 9 February 1842, and Emma Elizabeth, born on 25 November 1845.

A search for the name Witheridge in documents in the South Africa National Archives came up with forty Witheridge references, (including one of personal interest unrelated to this research, detailing the gravestone of my great-great-uncle Samuel Witheridge). Also listed was a death notice for James Witheridge in 1847, together with two further documents, his will and a valuation of his effects. It isn't possible to view these online, so I'm trying to find someone in South Africa who will do a look-up for me and send me the details.

Of John and Benetta's five surviving children, the two youngest, Matthew and Emma, never married. Matthew prospered, and became a well-respected member of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. He lived well into his seventies, and died on 7 April 1920. Emma also had a long life, and died on 16 December 1928.

Cont'd on page 18

John and Benetta's eldest surviving child, James Dold, married Charlotte Usher on 12 May 1847 in Grahamstown. They had four children, one of whom died in childhood, before John died prematurely in 1855, leaving Charlotte to bring up three daughters on her own. One of these daughters was also to face the premature death of her husband in terrible circumstances, but their descendants still survive in South Africa to this day.

Benetta Sarah Dold, born in 1831, married in about 1855 John A Morgan, and I'm still trying to discover what happened to the Morgans and whether there are any descendants.

John Dold, born 1833, married in 1857 Margaret Martha Trollip, and died on 22 June 1905. In this family we see another suggestion of a link with the Yealmpton family. Their first son, born on 8 May 1858, was named Walter John. Widespread checking has revealed no previous Walter in either the Dold or Trollip families, so was the name suggested by Benetta in honour of her uncle Walter? John and Margaret had one daughter and eight sons, with hundreds of descendants, despite the fact that one whole family was wiped out in minutes in a terrible disaster. Their stories will have to wait until the next issue of *Witheridge Times*, when I will also include a list of the websites used in this research.

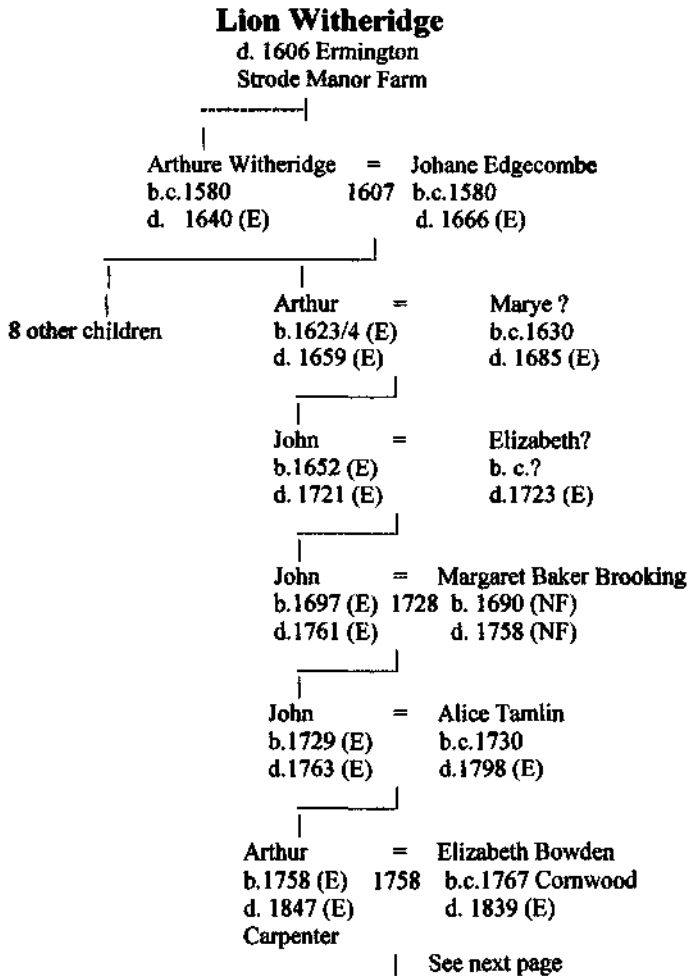
By then I hope also to have found some evidence for the origins of James and what happened to him in London. Sadly, this information is not available online, so I will have to try and visit the London Metropolitan Archives to check the records of the Great Queen Street congregation.

Meanwhile, my desktop detective work on this family will continue. I hope to find many more of Benetta's descendants, including present-day ones, to add to the family tree, and will add these findings to the second part of this story in the next issue of *Witheridge Times*. Maybe it will lead to our first-ever South African member of the Witheridge FHS, and perhaps in time to the establishment of a South African branch of the Witheridge FHS.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDERS

I am sorry to have to remind members that the subscriptions for 2004 fell due at the beginning of January. Can you please check and where necessary make the payment to The Witheridge Family History Society via the Membership Secretary, Richard. Thank you.

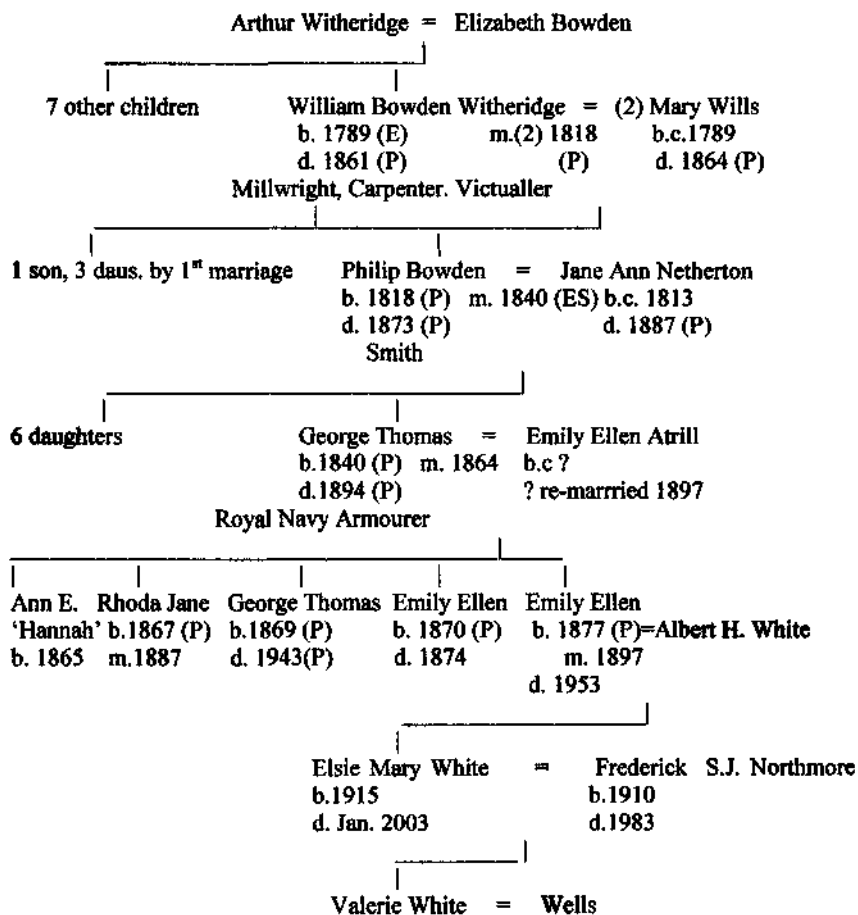
SECTION OF THE ERMINGTON FAMILY TREE FROM DATA AVAILABLE. FEBRUARY, 2004 . SHOWING LINE OF DESCENT TO MEMBER VALERIE WELLS



(E) = Ermington

(NF) = Newton Ferrers

Compiled by J.R. Browne Feb. 2004



(E) = Ermington
 (ES) = East Stonehouse
 (P) = Plymouth

Compiled February 2004

FAMILY PORTRAITS - NO 2

Family Portraits -No 2

Eva Florence Witheridge Mrs Arthur Gleeson, 1895-1978

Eva, the eldest child of William Henry Witheridge and his wife Flora Annie Marks, was born on 5 August 1895 in Fulham. It is said that her father originally wanted her, as his first-born, to be called Eve after the first woman, but after some discussion this was adapted to Eva. The name Florence was added in honour of her mother, Flora.

In the following ten years a further seven children were born to William and Flora - Dorothy, Olive, Bill (mother of Brenda Dixon and Mary Foster), Ethel (mother of Joyce Mamham and Eric Pover) Winifred, Harold (father of Rod Witheridge) and Elsie, of whom all but Winifred survived into adult life. Seven years later my mother Marjorie, the baby of the family, was born.

Eva soon became the natural leader of her younger brothers and sisters, who were quite a rumbustious crew. The family home at 133 New King's Road, Fulham was an easy-going, lively place. Flora, as well as being organist at the local Baptist church in Dawes Road, also enjoyed secular music, and as most members of the family had good singing voices, there were often sing-songs of hymns and music-hall favourites around the organ in the front room. Eva and Olive had particularly fine voices, and Eva became an accomplished pianist.

Flora also enjoyed a good game of cards, and taught her children all the family games, which were usually played with great hilarity. Eva's conviviality and sense of fun contributed greatly to these enjoyable times. Snooker, tennis, football, croquet and cricket all featured in family life. Eva was renowned for her try-anything-once approach, and tried all these sports, though usually she preferred watching to playing. As a spectator she would cheer family and friends with great gusto.

The front door of the house in New Kings Road was never locked, day or night, and Eva and her brothers and sisters would bring home friends at any hour. Eva was naturally bright, and won a place at Greycoat School in Westminster.

In her blunt, down-to-earth way, Eva gave her siblings nicknames, many of which stuck into adult life. Dorothy had two nicknames - Dossie (because she day-dreamed, something the unsentimental Eva never did), and later also Gandhi (because she was very thin, which again, Eva wasn't). Harold became Todd (after Sweeny Todd, but no-one ever explained quite how that one came about). Eva also called him Dustbin, because, even in that family of large appetites, he could be guaranteed to finish any leftovers! They in turn named Eva Swift (because she was a fast mover!) and later Swiller (because, despite her teetotal ancestry, she enjoyed a drink).

As in any family, there were disagreements and times of discord. Eva was always one to say exactly what she thought, even if the moment wasn't appropriate. Later, she earned the humorous epithet Eva Brick, which she took in great part! But she never held grudges. She said her piece, you knew where you stood, and then it was all forgotten. Nor was she one for crying over spilt milk, or having regrets. When anything went wrong, her pragmatic and philosophical nature led her to shrug her shoulders and get on with life.

Visits to Cromwell House, the home of her grandparents Edmund and Prudence Witheridge, were frequent. Here the atmosphere was much more formal, and the music very different. Edmund was a staunch member of the temperance movement, and songs denouncing the demon drink were often sung, both at home and at temperance meetings. One, which was Eva's solo, told how a mother sent her little girl to the pub to call her father home, because the baby was ill. With one verse for each hour, the song told how the child went back and forth, telling her father that the baby's condition was worse, and returning to tell her mother that her father wasn't coming home just yet until, in the final verse, the baby died. When Eva got to this bit, there wasn't a dry eye in the house!

But even at Cromwell House, Eva's impetuous humour could never be entirely repressed. Shortly before a garden party, at which Lloyd George and Lady Megan were to be guests, Eva and her brother Bill sneaked into their grandfather's study and found surplus invitation cards. Where these indicated a time for 'social intercourse', they altered the wording from 'social' to 'sexual'. Just as they finished they heard footsteps approaching, and hid behind the long velvet curtains. In came their grandfather with a visitor, to whom he gave an invitation! How the sniggering pair behind the curtains remained undetected they never knew, and neither of the men seemed to notice their graphic handiwork!

Cromwell House had tennis courts and a croquet lawn, and Eva often made a foursome with her orphaned cousins, Kate, Gwen and Vier Witheridge, children of William's brother Edmund. These girls, similar in age to Eva, were at boarding school but came to Cromwell House in the school holidays. On one occasion, probably some time between 1910 and 1912, the four girls were each given the princely sum of five shillings by their grandmother to make themselves scarce for a few hours. When they returned, Prudence collared them and asked what they had done with the money. Kate, Gwen and Vier showed their purchases, but Eva, thinking grandmother would be pleased with her thriftiness, hadn't spent any of it. As Eva proudly showed her five shillings, Prudence promptly snatched the money back. That was the end of any thriftiness on Eva's part, and from then on she never saved much, preferring to enjoy the benefits of her money while she had it.

After leaving school, Eva worked for a while in the family business, a builders' merchant in Dawes Road, Fulham. However, like the other children of William and Flora, most of whom worked in the business at one time or another, she enjoyed life too much to take business seriously.

In 1916 Eva married Arthur Gleeson, and they lived for a while in Hurlingham. Later that year their daughter Joan Mary was born. In January 1918 they had a son, Eric Arthur. Both parents doted on their son, calling him 'the little chappie' and the nick-name Chappie stuck, much to Eric's later disgust. However, in later years her marriage failed, and she and Arthur separated. But she never dwelt on the past, and I never heard a word of regret. She just got on with life.

Eva continued to enjoy a full social life. She always enjoyed card games, ranging from contract bridge, whist and poker, to canasta, cribbage, gin rummy and of course the old family favourites like Newmarket, Beggar-your-neighbour, Come-up and Old Maid.

Before driving tests became compulsory, Eva learned to drive a car - if you could call it driving! Had tests been in force, it is extremely doubtful if she would ever have held a licence! In her little Austin 7 convertible with its Perspex windows, Eva would

take family and friends for outings. These outings were varied - a trip to the coast, a day at the races, a boat on the river, or a picnic in the park.

During the war years, Eva lived at 27 Derwent Avenue, Kingston Vale, not far from her grandfather's former home on Kingston Hill. Her son Eric, who had worked as a jobber on the Stock Exchange, joined the army and was captured in Greece, spending the rest of the war years in prisoner-of-war camps. Joan worked in the typing pool at London Transport's Chiswick depot, and in the evenings was a volunteer fire-watcher at Norbiton. Joan became engaged, but her fiancé was also captured, and died while working on the notorious Burma railway.

For a while, Eva worked for British American Tobacco in London, where she was, as ever, the cheerful centre of a crowd who did their best to enjoy life despite the war. But eventually the journeys to London and the uncertainty of raids, together with her constant worries about Chappie, led her to give up work. At this time she took in her infant niece (me!) and cared for me for ten years.

Her cooking was excellent, and during the war a considerable part of her large garden was given over to fruit and vegetables, which she tended with the help of a gardener, Mr Godwin. The crops were varied and abundant, and what wasn't eaten at the time was bottled in Kilner jars, or made into jams, jellies and chutneys, which stood in ordered rows with neat labels in her walk-in larder. Even when food was in short supply, there was always something in the store cupboard, either for us to eat, or to be bartered with neighbours for eggs from their chickens. But there were still always enough flowers in the garden to fill many vases in the house.

Here, as in all her homes, Eva's hospitality was legendary, and at family gatherings she would provide enough food to feed the proverbial five thousand. She taught me to make pastry, butterfly cakes and chocolate crispies, but would cut bread with the loaf held vertically to her ample bosom, sawing towards herself. We all expected disaster, in the form of serious wounds if not mastectomy, but she had perfected the art and never injured herself!

In winter the porringer being stood on the boiler overnight. On freezing mornings we would wrap up in warm dressing gowns, come down to the kitchen, the only warm room in the house, stoke the boiler and dish up the hot porrage. If she had any golden syrup in the house, we would write our initials in syrup in the porrage, before giving it a good stir and eating it. To this day, I still love porrage for breakfast on a winter morning, and have occasionally been known to write my initials in syrup!

Eva was, like all her sisters, an excellent needlewoman. There was usually something in her sewing basket, and her Singer treadle machine fascinated me. She stitched curtains, tablecloths, napkins, clothes and nightdresses on the machine, and then decorated many items by hand. During clothes rationing she made many of my clothes out of cut-down ones of her own. She smocked, she frilled and she embroidered, and taught me to do likewise with dolls' clothes and handkerchiefs. But I never achieved anything like her standard - a fact which I always blamed on my left-handedness.

Washday was an energetic day. The big sink would be filled with hot water, and washing soda to soften it. If no washing powder were available, she would fill a net bag with scraps of soap and swish it round until there was a good lather. Then the washboard went into the water, and she scrubbed, removing each item ready to go into the rinsing water. Rinsing had to be thorough. The ultimate test was that you had to be able to drink the rinsing water and not taste soap! Whites were then soaked in Reckitt's Blue before a final rinse, and all but the most delicate items were put through

a wringer. As long as the weather was reasonably crisp and dry, clothes went out on the line in the garden, but in the winter washing was hung on the wooden and wrought-iron rack that came down on pulley ropes from the kitchen ceiling. The warmth from the boiler helped get everything dry.

Taking on an extra child at the age of 49 was tiring, and Eva often took a nap in the afternoons. In the summer we would sit in the garden, where she would read or doze. At other times, we would go to the sitting room, where she would stretch out on the settee and listen to *Woman's Hour* and the afternoon play. We both loved the detective plays, but Eva rarely discovered who-dun-it as she was usually asleep long before the end, snoring lightly and puffing air out between her lips! After tea came *Children's Hour* and, from 1947 onwards, *The Archers*, a programme she followed till her dying day, and to which I still listen regularly!

Music was always a part of Eva's life, and her tastes were wide-ranging. She enjoyed *Housewives' Choice* and *Music While You Work*. She often played her upright piano, and later bought a big black grand piano. She insisted I learn as well, but when we had a sing-song she, being much more proficient, would accompany us both. We would sing all the old songs - songs like 'All through the night there's a little brown bird singing' and 'Bless this house' were among her favourites.

Eva's try-anything-once approach made her a sucker for gadgets, and every year she came back from the *Ideal Home* exhibition laden with the latest goodies - a Cona coffee percolator, a collapsible cream-maker, the latest easy silver cleaner, hinged trays to fit over the arms of upholstered chairs, aluminium jelly moulds shaped like rabbits, pastry cutters shaped like hearts, diamonds, spades and clubs for card party biscuits, and implements galore. You name it, she bought it! She even ordered a water-softener and had it installed in a kitchen cupboard which thereafter could never shut properly!

Chappie had eventually come home in 1946, having suffered considerably, and was still a cause of worry for Eva. Later Joan started dating Joe Chester, a colleague at London Transport, and a lovely man. They married in 1949 at the church in Kingston Vale. For a while Joan and Joe had a flat in Fulham, but when the landlord wanted it for one of his own family, they came back to Eva's house in Kingston Vale until they could find another flat. Eva generously gave them the main bedroom, she and I had twin beds in the second bedroom, while Eric had the third bedroom, with its balcony over the front porch. In 1951 Eric, now a stockbroker, married Celia Fenwick, and they moved first to Putney and then to Englefield Green. Joan and Joe had found another flat, I was in boarding school most of the time, and Eva was on her own for the first time in her life. She soon became bored.

Impulsively, and despite the warnings of many in her family, she decided to set up in business. She sold her lovely house and bought a bakery and tea-shop in Chaldon Road, Caterham. Despite the success of Eva's home-made cakes, the location was unsuitable and the venture was a financial disaster. After about four years Eva was forced to sell up and move into rented accommodation. Ever pragmatic and philosophical, she never grumbled, and for some time worked as a live-in home help in an elegant house on Kew Green. The garden here had its own private door into Kew Gardens, and she would often slip into the gardens for a quiet stroll, even when they were closed to the public.

Eva was a great dog-lover, and in the late 1930s had a Shetland sheepdog called Judy. Later, she rescued Boots, a dog abused by his owner who ran a riding stables in Kingston Vale. When this man moved back to Scotland, he demanded Boots back, but

Eva stood her ground, and cared for the dog until he died of old age. Judy lived until the early 1950s, and was replaced by a Yorkshire terrier called Topsy. Eva was heartbroken when her employers at Kew bought a dog of their own and insisted she give Topsy, then ten years old, away.

Soon after Roy and I married, Eva had to move on again, and for a while was unable to find suitable accommodation. In our tiny house in Morden, Surrey, we cleared two rooms - one as a store-room for her furniture, possessions (and budget-regular!), and one as her bedroom. One day, while I was at work, she decided to clean all my saucepans until they shone. However, for once I had beaten her in the gadget stakes, and the pans included my first non-stick ones. When she berated me for having black pans, and assured me she'd cleaned off all the black, I wept! She, who never believed in crying over spilt milk, couldn't understand my tears.

After the death of Arthur, Eva was courted for many years by Griff Evans, an old family friend who had a grocery business in Fulham. Griff became very much part of the family, joining in the Sunday gatherings with their inevitable card games, sharing our family Christmas and birthday celebrations, and becoming godfather to one of Eva's grandchildren. Griff proposed more than once, but Eva refused to be drawn into another marriage. After years of patiently waiting for Eva to change her mind, Griff eventually married someone else, and he and Eva went their separate ways.

Although never sentimental or demonstrative, Eva was nevertheless a very warm and generous person. The death, in 1973, of her son-in-law Joe Chester from a heart attack stunned her, and she felt the loss for Joan and their daughter Caroline very deeply. Caroline later trained as a nurse, specialising in paediatric nursing, and at the end of her first year of training won a coveted award for best practical nurse. Eva was as proud as Punch to be with Joan at the presentation and see her grand-daughter receive the award.

By that time I was well into family history and after many years of searching had tracked down cousin Kate, with whom Eva had played so often in childhood. Edmund's children, never really happy after the death of their parents and the consequences, had lost touch with the rest of the family, and Eva hadn't seen Kate since 1918. We arranged for them to spend a day together at our home, where they enjoyed reminiscing and catching up on family news. It was the only time I saw Eva really dwell on the past - she was usually too busy enjoying the present. Within a year, both Kate and Eva had died, but Eva was always glad she'd had the chance to catch up with Kate one last time.

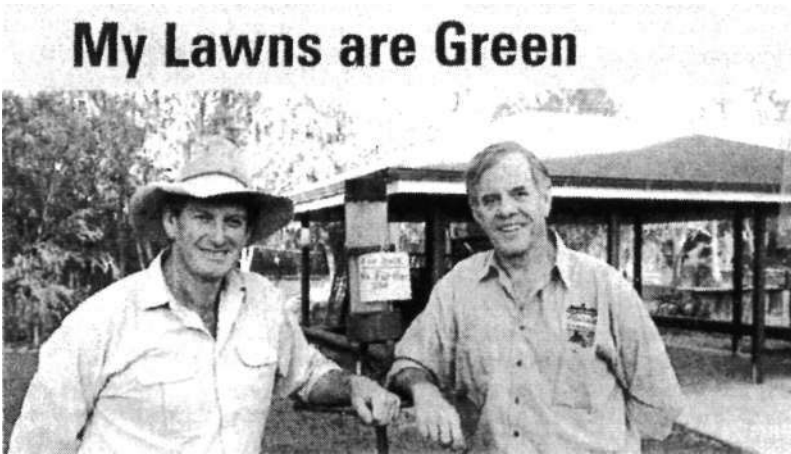
Eva's final years were spent in a small bedsit in Chiswick, a far cry from the luxury and comfort of her early days. As ever, she made the best of things and stayed cheerful, never expressing any regret or bitterness at the way things turned out. In her battered old Vauxhall Viva she used to collect the local 'old folk' (most of whom were at least ten years her junior!) and take them to a social club where she helped serve teas. They may have appreciated the lift, but most of her family lived in terror of being driven by Eva! Kerbs, roundabouts, pavements and the like were, to her, just obstacles to be driven over!

Such was her energy and enthusiasm for life, that we were all convinced she would live to reach her century. However, during 1977 Eva developed a string of bronchitic infections and had a couple of spells in hospital. Throughout she was cared for devotedly by her daughter Joan, and by Caroline when she was at home. Eva returned home from her second spell in hospital in January 1978.

Some days later she again became unwell and, as Joan was working and I was at home with our children, Eva came to stay with us. After nearly a week she seemed to improve a little, although continually complaining of thirst. Despite our urging that she should stay with us and see our doctor, Eva insisted on returning home in time for the visit of her home help. She was worried that if she didn't return, the local authority would cancel her home help. Reluctantly we took her back to Chiswick, and when Joan visited her the next evening, Eva's condition had again deteriorated. Eva was admitted to Charing Cross Hospital, where she soon lapsed into a coma, subsequently discovered to have been caused by undiagnosed diabetes. She died on 29 January, at the age of 82, and her funeral service was held a few days later at Putney Crematorium.

Food for thought.

A poem by JOYCE ALCHIN sent to me by Dorothy Witheridge in Australia.



Rob Turnbull and Peter Joseph. Rain gauge sign 'For Sale No Further Use'

I tuned to country radio and listened to the news-
"there's still no rain in sight" they said. I guess I could excuse
the many living on the land who gaze up at the sky,
for wondering where the clouds have gone, how could it be so dry?

While those like me, now city based, enjoy each sunny day,
wish selfishly that cloudless skies would never go away,
with little thought for country folk and their enormous need-
the starving stock, diminished crops, no water no feed.

And then I focused on the calls that came to Macca's show
that Sunday morning, and I learnt some things I didn't know.

I sensed the desperation as they talked of wind and dust
one lady said she'd leave the farm, she felt she'd not adjust
to threats of further choking grit, she'd rather live in town,
than let the stress of cleaning up return and get her down.

The grassless paddocks, empty dams and stock routes closed as well
decisions of great magnitude, what stock to keep or sell.
I also heard a farmer speak- he too owned land out west,"
I'd like to talk of drought" he said "we thought we'd done our best

by having sheds well stacked with hay and silos full of grain,
enough to conquer any drought, but still we've felt the pain
as now for months we've fed our sheep until the sheds are bare-
we do not know which way to turn we don't know how or where.

We're feeding stock it seems all day, there's just the wife and me,
you understand how tired we are- it's endless, can't you see"
I heard the sadness in his voice, how thoughtless I had been,
as I ignored the country plight because my lawns are green,
while he has non-existent crops and others feel they'll lose,
their meagre stalks to emu-hordes and mobs of kangaroos,

Agistment that is hard to get, the shocking price of hay
and other feed, while stocks when sold are almost given away.
But gratitude is truly there for government aid,
assistance too that others give, the part that they have played.

There's been a little rain since then, again the phones ran hot,
as puddles formed' an inch or two' they said' was not a lot'
nor would it break this long-term drought but still it gives us hope,
for we know now it still can rain, so maybe we can cope.

I may feel insulation from the heartache to be found
in the bush that at the moment is a parched and thirsty ground,
but now I know that I can show I care that I can give
and maybe help a sheep, a cow a farmer's hope to live.

FOUND

Found - perhaps we should say 'lost' - information found by Sheila Jewell.
Wolboroueh. Newton Abbot

Edward Witheridge
Charlotte Adel Witheridge
Ellen Elizabeth Witheridge
Essma Daisy Witheridge

East St., 26th February, 1935 aged 83
22nd August, 1892 aged 13 months.
8th March, 1894 aged 18
13th June, 1895 aged 2 months.

We thought at first that these were all members of the same Newton Abbot family, but after investigation we found that they were not.

Edward Witheridge was the son of William Witheridge and Susan Brimmicombe. Born in 1849, he was a gardener, and in 1870, he married Emma Isabella Cross in Newton Abbot. She pre-deceased him in 1925 in Newton Abbot.

Ellen Elizabeth Witheridge, buried in 1894 aged 18, was the daughter of Edward and Emma Isabella, and it must have been a blow to them to lose her at that young age.

Perhaps it was an even greater cause of grief for Frederick Witheridge and his wife Ruth Matthews to lose two of their daughters. They were the parents of Charlotte Adel Witheridge, buried Newton Abbot 1892, aged 13 months, and Essma Daisy Witheridge buried Newton Abbot 1894, aged 2 months.

Frederick belonged to the Ermington family. He was the son of Arthur Witheridge and his wife Charlotte Honey Fredrick. By profession he was a baker, and he married Ruth Matthews in 1887. We do not usually associate the Ermington family with Newton Abbot, but this branch has associations with Plymouth, Tavistock, Newton Abbot and Bridgwater, Somerset, where Frederick died in 1941.

IT COULDN'T BE DONE ! (Just a filler)

Somebody said that it couldn't be done, so he with a chuckle replied
That maybe it couldn't but he would be the one who wouldn't say so till he tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin on his face if he worried he hid it
He started to sing as he tackled the thing that couldn't be done and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done there are thousand to prophesy failure
There are thousands to point out to you one by one the dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle right in with a bit of a grin, just take off your coat and go to it
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing, that cannot be done and you'll do it.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

Kim Cook looks at some Witheridge wills and the families they relate to.

The old saying 'where there's a will, there's a way' applies to will-power or determination, but it might also be applied to wills and bequests. A bequest can lead to a way of increased prosperity, or a way of dissipation, depending on how it's used. But sometimes where there's a will, there's a war, particularly if an expected windfall doesn't materialise! Occasionally there are outright disputes, but more often there can be niggling resentments which fester and lead to a family fracture at a later date. Wills are invaluable documents to the family historian. Even when they don't tell us much, they always tell us something about the testator and his or her circumstances. But we need to look at wills in the context of the whole family to see whether they opened up a new way or a perhaps led to a later family split.

With this in mind, I've been taking a closer look at some Witheridge wills of which I have copies. As we're preparing for the 2004 Witheridge reunion in Tavistock, it seems appropriate to look first at a will relating to someone from Tavistock.

1 Richard Witheridge of Tavistock, 1834

Although Richard Witheridge died in Tavistock in 1834, he wasn't born there. He was the youngest of nine children born to Thomas Witheridge of Bradworthy and his wife Mary Mountjoy, who were married there on 5 April 1749. Their first four children were baptised in Bradworthy - John (1749), Grace (1751), Thomas (1753) and Mary (1754). The family then moved to Morwenstow where the next four children were baptised - James (1757), William (1759), George (1761) and Elizabeth (1763), and then to Kilkhampton where Richard was baptised on 21 November 1766.

Where the family went after this is unclear. Certainly a number of the children lived in Tavistock, but if the parents moved there, they must at some stage have returned to Bradworthy, where Mary (née Mountjoy) was buried on 30 January 1794, and Thomas on 24 October 1807 'aged 86'.

One son, George, also settled in Bradworthy where in 1783 he married Jane Oke, and eight children were baptised. Many of this family emigrated to Canada. Four of Thomas and Mary's sons, Thomas, James, William and Richard, all settled in Tavistock, and it was here, on 30 March 1799 that Richard Witheridge, at the age of 33, married Mary Phillips. It was this Richard who died in 1834, and whose will I have.

Richard and Mary had at least eight children - Susanna (1801), Mary (1803), John Phillips (baptised 2 February 1805), Betsy (1807), George (1812), Grace (1814), Ann (1817) and Richard (baptised 22 January 1820). Susanna died in infancy, and nothing definite is known of Mary, Betsy, Grace or Ann. On 25 November 1835 a Grace Witheridge married William Tippet in Stoke Damerel, but we have found nothing to indicate whether or not this Grace was the daughter of Richard and Mary.

In 1832 John Phillips Witheridge married Jane Percy and the children we had listed for them were Richard (1834/5) John Phillips (1837), Emma Ann (1842), William (1844), William Percy (1846), Mary (1848), Ann (1850) and Alfred Percy (1855). However, the 1851 census shows Edwin Witheridge, a 12 year old slate worker, living at Higher Mill Hill, Lamerton, with his grandparents William Percy, aged 74, also a slate quarry worker, and Honour Percy, aged 71. This suggests that Edwin, born 1838/39, was also a son of John and Jane.

In 1845 George married Maria and had Mary Emma (1845) and Arminal (1849). In 1851 Mary Witheridge, age 73, is a visitor in George and Maria's home at Parswell, Tavistock, and it seems likely that this is George's mother. This indicates that Mary (née Phillips) was born about 1777 and would therefore have been 22 when she married Richard, who was then 32.

From this we can see that when Richard Witheridge died on 9 July 1834, at the age of 67, his wife Mary (ten years his junior) was still alive. Their son John Phillips, at 29, had been married for two years and was perhaps looking forward to the birth of a child, their son Richard, born late 1834 or early 1835. George, now 22, was still single and perhaps at home, and Richard, just 14, was also probably living at home.

The affidavit attached to their father's will, proved at the Archdeaconry Court of Totnes on 12 September 1834, states that the effects were all in the Archdeaconry of Totnes and were valued at less than £600, and it names their mother Mary as sole executrix. The will itself is dated 5 July 1834, just four days before Richard's death, so he must have been aware that his health was failing.

Richard describes himself as a yeoman of Hogbear (in other documents shown as Ogbeare) in the parish of Tavistock, and as being of sound and disposing mind and memory. 'Calling to mind the mortality of my body and knowing there is an appointed time once for all to die', he makes his last will and testament. As was common at the time, the first disposition is to commend his soul 'into the hands of Almighty God who gave it' and his body to be 'decently interred at the discretion of my Executrix', his wife Mary.

The will then refers to 'such worldly goods as God in his Mercy has been pleased to bestow upon me' and desires that all just debts, funeral expenses and expenses in proving the will be paid first. Next, he bequeaths to 'my Youngest son Richard my silver watch, silver shoe buckles and silver knee buckles', before leaving 'all the rest, residue and remainder of my estate and effects wheresoever and whatsoever and of what kind and quality soever... to my beloved wife Mary Witheridge... to be by her held, occupied and enjoyed during her life after which should there be any of the said property left I should wish the same to be equally divided amongst all my children at the discretion of my beloved wife Mary Witheridge'.

We don't know much about his wife Mary, to whom he was obviously devoted. The 1851 census suggests that she was born in Tavistock, c1777, but I have so far found no Mary Phillips born there at that time. However, a Mary Phillips, daughter of John and Susanna, was baptised on 26 April 1778 at Milton Abbot, about seven miles north-west of Tavistock. Did Richard and Mary name their first child in honour of Mary's mother?

Richard's will is witnessed by John Percy and Roger Percy (who both sign) and Roger Crossman (who makes his mark). Richard's daughter-in-law was Jane Percy, and until now we have been unable to identify Jane's parents, we can't say whether these Percys were closely related to her. The presence of Edwin Witheredge in the home of William and Honour Percy strongly suggests that they were Jane's parents, but as yet we vcan't say if or how the two witnesses might have been related to Jane.

Trying to identify the witnesses, I checked the 1851 census. This shows two men called Roger Perc(e)y, both born in the Tavistock area within five years of each other. The elder of the two, Roger Percy, an ag lab, was born in 1811 in Whitchurch. His wife Mary, two years his senior, came from Launceston, Cornwall, and six of their children were born in St Giles in the Heath between 1835 and 1847, with the youngest born in 1850 in Whitchurch. Although St Giles in the Heath is some miles north-east of Launceston, there is no evidence that Roger and Mary Percy were there in 1834, and indeed might well have been in his home district of Whitchurch, to which he returned in 1850, living at Middle More Cottages.

The other Roger Percy, four years younger, was a quarry agent born in Lamerton. He and his wife Louisa had four children born between 1835 and 1849, with their eldest, William, being born in Lanteglos, Cornwall. By 1851 they were at Quarry Cottage, Stokenham, Kingsbridge, but again, there is nothing to suggest that Roger wasn't in

Lamerton in 1834. Given that the Roger who witnessed the will was able to sign his name, the quarry agent seems the most likely of the two.

The only John Percy found in that area in 1851 is a 51-year-old registrar, living at New House, Tavistock with his 44-year-old wife Mary Ann. Both were born in Lamerton. As a registrar, John would certainly have been able to sign his name.

The only Roger Crossman found in the 1851 census of the area was aged 70, born Lifton. A lime quarry worker, he was living with his wife Loveday (60) and their son Thomas, a 23-year-old ag lab at Lifton Down, Tavistock. This would seem to fit with someone who couldn't sign his name, but made his mark.

The mention of the silver watch and buckles confirms the status of Richard and his obvious delight in his youngest son and namesake. The fact that there is apparently no namesake until 1820, and that the first known child of this couple shows up a full two years after the marriage, leads one to wonder if there might have been an earlier son Richard who died, perhaps after John and George were born. So far we have found nothing to support this theory, but it would explain the delay in naming a son Richard. I wonder what the other children felt about this bequest of silver, when they had no mention in the will at all. Had their father given each of them something before his death?

Although the estate is valued at under £600, other wills of the period specify 'under £200', so £600 was a goodly amount, and in keeping for a yeoman who could afford silver buckles. However, if he had made personal gifts of goods or money to his other children, either at marriage or at age 21, that would explain why Richard, the only one under 21, was singled out in the will.

Certainly by 1851 George was prosperous, farming 187 acres at Parswell and employing 2 labourers. John Phillips appears rather less prosperous, working as a labourer, and with his two teenage sons both working. Richard, at 16 was a mine labourer and John, just 13, was a farm labourer. Perhaps he was working for his uncle George at Parswell farm.

The census returns of 1871 and 1881 show that George and his family continued to farm at Parswell, and at his death on 12 November 1888 his estate was valued at a very substantial £948 7s 6d. John Phillips Witheridge died in Tavistock in 1871 at the age of 66. His wife Jane had died in 1869 at the age of 57, but I have found no trace of will or admon for either, indicating that the value of any estate was below the taxable level. And what of the Richard who inherited his father's silver watch and buckles? In 1843 he married Jane Ryder and had Cordelia (born 1844 in Tavistock) and Emma (born 1846 in Plymouth). By 1851 he had left Devon and become a policeman in London, living at 11 Royley Street, St Luke's, Finsbury with his wife Jane (28), daughter Emma (4) and visitors Ann Bailey (21, born Ringwood, Hants) and William Walpole, a 24-year-old salesman from Ireland. Their elder daughter Cordelia was living with her grandparents, Samuel and Jane Ryder, in Shute Lane, Ermington.

By 1871 Richard and Jane were in Fore Street, Ivybridge, where Richard was running a drapery business. Both daughters were unmarried and living with them. Ten years later, Richard, Jane and the unmarried Cordelia were still there, but Emma had moved on. In 1872 she had married William Crossing in Ivybridge, and nine years later they were living in Splatten House, South Brent, with a 16-year-old niece Beatrice C Anness, born in Devonport. Although William Crossing was still at that time running

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