

WITHERIDGE TIMES

Volume 24 No 2

Summer-Autumn 2010

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Letter
from the
Editor

Tenterden, Kent
September 2010



Dear Friends

After an absence of over two years, you will at last have heard the sound so many of you have said you enjoy so much – that of *Witheridge Times* dropping through your mail-box!

The two stop-gap editions, emailed to those with Internet access, were just that – temporary stop-gap issues. Now I'm no longer a stop-gap, having been elected as Editor, a post I last held more years ago than I care to remember! While there will inevitably be changes, I hope *Witheridge Times* will continue to bring you all pleasure.

Although we could have continued with emailed issues, a survey by **Richard Witheridge**, our Membership Secretary and Treasurer, has shown that, while you appreciate the benefits of cost saving, instant delivery, and colour content that result from emailing, most also love getting a printed copy through the post. Perhaps the bombardment of emails, and the comparative scarcity of snail-mail, make the old-fashioned option more attractive! Or maybe it's just that family historians are more nostalgic!

Given that there are some who can't yet receive the *Witheridge Times* file *via* the Internet, it seemed sensible to move back to printing and posting, at least for the time being.

We've now consulted with **Parchments**, the company who had printed *Witheridge Times* for some years, to assess the optimum number of pages to give you the best possible value without breaking the budget. We found that three issues a year, each of 40 pages plus covers, was the optimum size for the time being. If membership, and therefore income, increases, we could have more pages. So, if you want more news and articles, try persuading your *Witheridge* relations to join us! As you'll see from the AGM minutes, we can now welcome people descended from *Witheridge/Wetheridge* step-families, foster families, and others with close *Witheridge* links.

In this issue we're delighted to welcome two new full members, a returning member, and three family members. We trust they will all enjoy their membership, make new friends, and learn more about their

family history. Information on these new members starts on page 4. We're grateful that one new member, **Liz Davey**, has written a report on the Tenterden Reunion in June (see page 24). Thank you, Liz!

Roy and I greatly enjoyed meeting everyone at the Reunion, with the AGM conducted swiftly and efficiently by our new Chairman, leaving much more time for the more interesting and sociable side of the gathering! We hope this will be the pattern for the future!

Thanks are due to our guest, **Rob Calder**, who brought a real family treasure to show us. Thanks also go to all who attended, particularly to **Zoe Cook** for helping with the catering, and to **Barbara Finmore**, who volunteered to be our Minutes Secretary, and who delivered all her notes on time, despite the coping with the death of her mother (see page 36). I also owe enormous thanks to **Roy**, for his tireless help with preparations, finishing the new conservatory, arranging furniture there and in the meeting room, cleaning the decking, and tidying the garden. He's a star!

Unfortunately, while trying to juggle eggs, acting as temporary Secretary, as well as caterer, hostess, photographer, and organising displays, I managed to drop a large egg! I completely forgot to arrange the traditional group photo! My apologies for that, but I hope some of the other photos taken during the day (which can be found scattered through the minutes and report) will give a flavour of how things went.

It's good, too, to have a lovely report from **Judith and Allan Witheridge** (page 26), on the annual Australian picnic, this year at Greenwell Bay, with photos from **Rob Staples**. Thank you all. Roy and I dearly wish we could have been with you, but as that isn't possible, your reports are the next best thing, and we can at least picture you having fun. We hope it won't be too long before some of you will be able to visit the UK and join our UK reunions – perhaps for our 25th Anniversary in 2012 (see page 25).

This issue also has Part I of the story of the Kent Witheridges (page 28), updated considerably since it was first told at the 2008 AGM. With so much new information now available, the story of the origins of our Birmingham family is much clearer. As with so many Witheridge and Wetheridge families, although an enormous amount of research work has been done, there is always more! As a way of helping those still looking to fill the gaps, *Witheridge Times* will be including useful information about sources and news from record offices (see page 38).

May your research be fruitful and your families happy!

Kim

Welcome to New Members

We are delighted to welcome two new full members, both of whom attended our AGM and Reunion in June, a rejoining member, and three additional members, including Liz Davey's husband, **Chris Davey**, who sadly had a prior engagement and so wasn't able to join us at the Reunion. We hope to meet you soon, Chris, and wish all our new members a happy and fruitful membership.



Mrs Elizabeth Davey
28 Lys Hill Gardens, Hertford
Herts SG14 3EH
email: chris@turnerlogs.com

Elizabeth Davey, née Barr (usually known as Liz), is from the branch of the Witheridge family we refer to as the Totnes branch, although this family can be traced back to **John Witheridge** of Bideford (born c 1771), and **Jane Emmet** born c 1785, of Halwell.

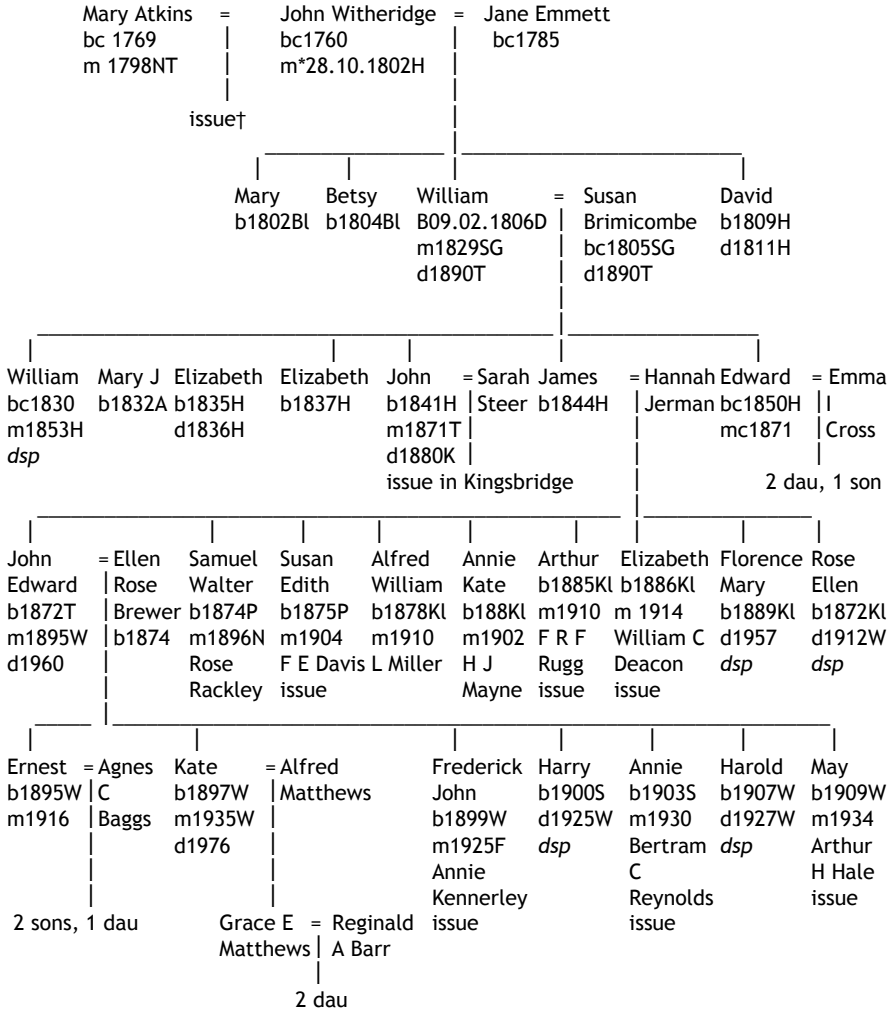
John and Jane's son, **William Witheridge**, born in 1806, married, in 1829 in Stoke Gabriel, **Susan Brimicombe** (spelled in various ways in different documents). Their great-grand-daughter **Kate Witheridge** (1897-1976) was Liz's maternal grandmother. The family tree showing Liz's ancestry is on the opposite page.

Liz was born in Weston-super Mare, Somerset, but after leaving school went to Balls Park Teacher Training College, Hertford. In Hertford she met Chris Davey, and they married in September 1980. Later Liz worked in the Civil Service, but after the birth of their daughter, Rebecca, became a part-time teacher in a local school.

Liz has always been interested in history, and enjoys solving puzzles, so Chris hit the jackpot when, for Christmas over 20 years ago, he bought her a book on how to research family history!

Family and work commitments made it difficult for Liz to make much progress until records came on-line. Since then she has spent many hours glued to the computer screen researching her own and Chris's families. They have followed this up with several ancestor-hunting days out in London, Suffolk, Norfolk, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Somerset and Devon, with several counties still to go! Liz has some fascinating stories about these trips, which we hope to include in future issues of *Witheridge Times*.

Halwell and Totnes Family Tree



KEY

A = Ashprington B = Brixham Bl=Blackawton D = Dittisham H= Halwell
 K = Kingsbridge Kl = Kingskerswell N=Newton Abbot NT = North Tawton P= Paignton
 S = Swindon SG = Stoke Gabriel T = Totnes W= Weston-super-Mare
 * = marriage later declared invalid dsp = died without issue

† Descendants from this first marriage include our members Julia Crocker, Clare Naghdi, Ann Pohlschmidt, Philip Witheridge and Simon Witheridge

Compiled September 2010 by Kim Cook from information available at that date

Our second new member is

Dr Philip J Milnes-Smith

2 Balmoral Gardens, Parkhill Road

Bexley, Kent DA5 1HP

email: sloughetonpmsmith@yahoo.co.uk



Philip is the son of our members Alan and Alison Smith, from the Bradworthy branch of the family. He was born in Stourbridge in 1972, grew up first in Halesowen and then in Altrincham, before the family moved to Folkestone, Kent in 1988.

After school Philip went to Newcastle University, where he gained a Combined Honours degree in Ancient History and Archaeology, and a PhD in Ancient History. For three years he worked as a researcher in Ancient History at Royal Holloway College, the Surrey campus of London University. While there, he learned that there was another P J Smith publishing research work in the same field so, to avoid confusion, Philip officially changed his name, adding his mother's maiden name.

Later, Philip retrained as a teacher. As he was always interested in children with special needs, he went on to specialise in this field.

When asked what he does when not working, Philip joked 'I don't understand the question!' However, he takes a strong interest in his niece Hannah, who has special needs, and is very supportive of sister Catherine and her husband Geoff. He also loves classical music and opera, which he uses as a background when working, and occasionally actually manages to get to a live performance!

Philip recently moved to Bexley to teach in a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and autism. Although interested in family history, his first love is ancient history, so by comparison, our research is very modern stuff!

Our rejoining member is

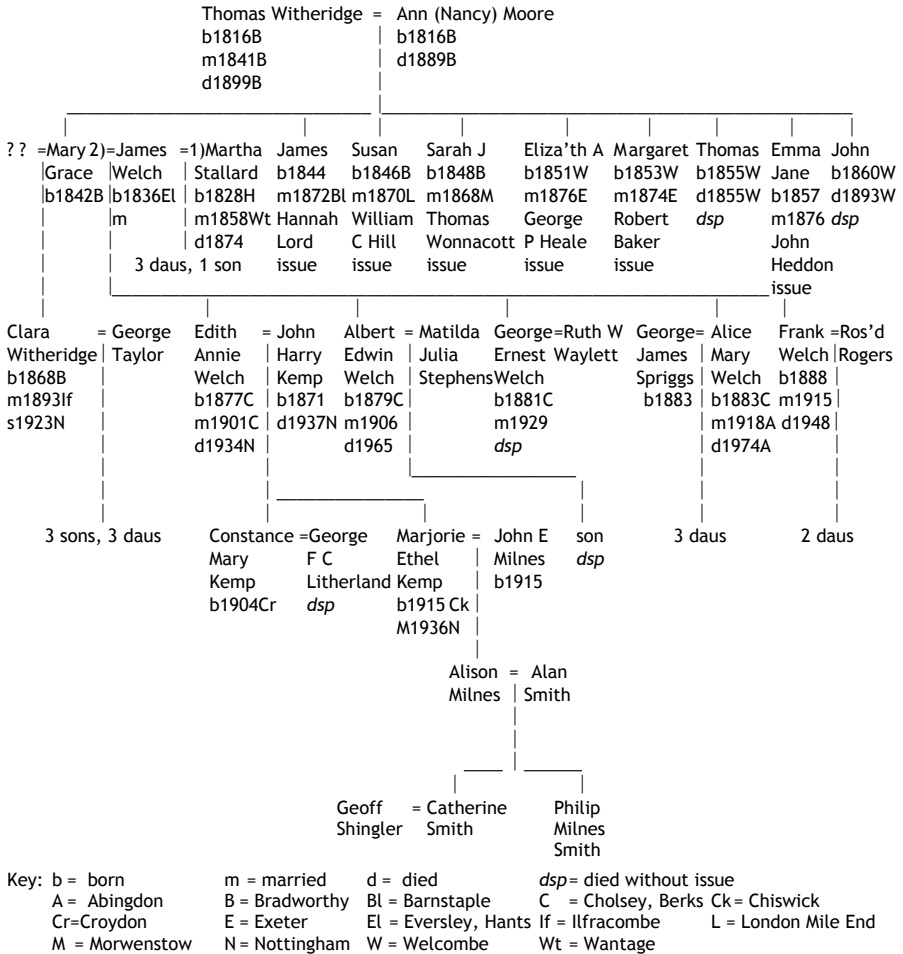
Mrs Catherine Shingler

26 Peterborough Road, Eye, Peterborough, Cambs, PE6 7YB

email: shingler@supanet.com

Catherine Shingler (née Smith), who was born in Leicester, is the daughter of Alan and Alison Smith, and sister of Philip (above), from the Bradworthy branch. After leaving school, Catherine studied French and International Relations, and followed this with a teacher training course. For a while she worked in a primary school in Gillingham, Kent.

Bradworthy Family Tree



While still a student, Catherine met Geoff Shingler, and in 1996 they were married in Folkestone. Catherine and Geoff were Witheridge FHS members some years ago and attended the 2002 Reunion. However, after the birth of daughter Hannah, who has special needs, Catherine was also unwell, and unable to continue her interest in family history. With parents Alan and Alison now living nearby and able to help out, Catherine is once again able to take up her family history. Welcome back Catherine, Geoff and Hannah!

Family News

Golden Wedding Congratulations (1)

In May, Pamela and Derek Glynn celebrated their Golden Wedding with a garden party at the Bristol home of their son Andrew. Martin, Andrew and Helen, Katy, William and Emily all worked hard to make the day as enjoyable as the celebrations 50 years ago. There were 30 guests in all, plus three dogs and two rabbits – a very informal, lovely day, blessed with good weather.



Derek and Pamela Glynn at their Golden Wedding celebrations.

Golden Wedding Congratulations (2)

Richard and Maureen Witheridge sent the following news of their Golden Wedding Anniversary celebrations on 9 July 2010.

We couldn't think of anything nicer than having the whole family together to celebrate, so we invited everyone to stay, which made 11 of us – great fun! Our daughter Ann with grandchildren Sarah, Becky, and Hannah arrived a few days before the others and had the opportunity to watch the Red Devils and the Red Arrows display on Minehead Seafront, a fantastic show. Mark, Jenny, and James, and Sue and Andrew, arrived later and we had a brilliant few days from a trip to the Yeovilton Fleet Air Arm museum to fun and games on the beach. It's gone awfully quiet now!!



Left: Family gathering to celebrate Richard and Maureen's Golden Wedding Anniversary.

Back row from left: Sue, Andrew, Mark, Richard, Maureen and Ann.

Front, seated: James, Jenny, Hannah, Sarah and Becky.

Condolences

We send our condolences to **Barbara and Terry Finemore** on the death, on Sunday 12 June, of **Iris Edna Dawson**, Barbara's mother. Barbara and Terry were here in Tenterden with us when she received the news that her mother had died, just a few weeks short of her centenary. An obituary is on page 36.

Grandchildren, gardening, and all that jazz!

Rod and Sue Witheridge of Chiswick, London, are delighted to announce the arrival of **Edward William Witheridge**, born on 16 March 2010 in London to **Grant and Melitta**. **Eddie** (as he is known) is their fourth grandchild, and is shown right, aged three months, peacefully snoozing on Sue's lap.

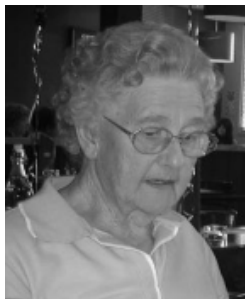


Eddie Witheridge

Rod writes that grandchildren and travels have meant he no longer has the time to keep his beautiful garden in sufficiently good shape for the gardening competitions in which he has previously won a number of prizes.

Travels this year have included a trip to Florida in May. Keen fans of traditional jazz, Rod and Sue have also managed to get away for a number of jazz breaks. They're planning to visit son Lance, with Miranda, and children Lily and Harry in New Zealand later this year 'when it's warm there and cold and miserable here', adding that he 'can't wait to get my arms around the Kiwi grandchildren'!

Lance and his family used to live in Christchurch, but earlier in the year Lance made a work-related move to Auckland. This timing was good, as it meant that they all escaped the earthquake. However, Lance has retained his former character home there, which did suffer some damage, particularly chimneys falling in and damaging the roof. They're hoping that most of the damage will be covered by insurance.



More news from New Zealand

Sue Witheridge has been keeping us up to date with news of her mum, former member **Eve Witheridge** (left), in Christchurch. In February, the day before her 88th birthday, Eve moved to a studio apartment in The Oaks, a development



Sue Witheridge with brothers Brian (left) and Tony (right)

for senior citizens, near her former home. Sue says the apartment's like a cabin on a luxury liner, with en-suite and under-floor heating! Lunch is served in a small dining room, but breakfast and supper are served in the apartment. Activities and outings are also laid on. Close to Eve's apartment, and

overlooking the beautiful garden, is a comfortable lounge with facilities for making tea and coffee.

Sue, who spends much of the year working in the UK, was back home in Christchurch to organise the move, along with brother Tony and his wife Tania, who live in Christchurch. Their other brother, Brian, now lives in Australia.

A few weeks after the move, Sue returned to the UK, but she and all their UK family were very worried when news of the Christchurch earthquake broke, followed by news of over 800 aftershocks. We're pleased to hear that Eve is fine, as The Oaks has back-up systems for power and utilities, and Eve doesn't have to worry about shopping. However, Tony's business premises have suffered considerably, and may have to be demolished. A state of emergency has been declared. Hundreds of families are homeless and many, particularly children, are traumatised. Bridges and roads have been split and buckled. Sue writes:

'Some 100,000 of the city's 160,000 homes will have to be demolished. A huge percentage of the whole city will disappear. The cordon around the central city has been widened now due to the severe aftershocks. Christchurch history is about 100 years old at the best, but most of the heritage sites have gone or will go. It's history being wiped out before your eyes.'

Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who have family and friends in the Christchurch area.



Left: Rubble and smoke after the earthquake.



Right: Main roads have been split and buckled.

*Minutes of the
Witheridge Family History Society
Annual General Meeting, 12 June 2010*

The AGM was held at 11.30 am on 12 June 2010, at Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent, the home of Roy & Kim Cook.

Present: **Jason & Zoe Cook, Roy & Kim Cook, Elizabeth Davey, Barbara & Terry Finemore, Philip Milnes-Smith, and Alan & Alison Smith.**

1 Chairman's Welcome

Kim Cook, as Honorary President and Acting Chairman, welcomed everyone to our 24th Reunion and 23rd AGM, particularly two new members, Elizabeth (Liz) Davey and Philip Milnes-Smith. Kim also announced that a guest, **Mr Rob Calder**, would be arriving later, with a book that had belonged to **Edward Witheridge** in 1681. Other invited guests had been unable to come, but Kim hoped that, if the appropriate measures were agreed during the AGM, some of these potential members might join the Society, and augment our gatherings. Kim also sent the Society's best wishes to those who had experienced serious or long-term health problems, or bereavement, particularly **Joyce Browne**, and also **Paul & Beryl Witheridge**, who sadly had recently resigned. Kim apologised for any failings in picking up the extra work prior to the AGM, but hoped that a positive and productive meeting would enable us to put a difficult year behind us, and move forward with confidence to a happier year, working to increase both membership and member participation, and strengthening friendships.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from **Joyce Browne, Brenda & Ron Dixon, Pamela & Derek Glynn, Rodney & Velma Metcalfe (NZ), Catherine & Geoff Shingler, David & Valerie Wells, Allan & Judith Witheridge (Australia), Jim Witheridge & David Torborg (USA), Philip & Bettina Witheridge, Richard & Maureen Witheridge, Rod & Sue Witheridge, and Simon & Camilla Witheridge.**

Many also sent greetings and good wishes. Kim Cook reported that Joyce Browne, one of our Honorary Life Vice-Presidents, had particularly wanted to be at the meeting, but that her slow recovery from cancer treatment had made the journey impossible. Those present signed a card, conveying our very best wishes to Joyce.

The Acting Chairman then asked if members would agree to bring forward an emergency proposal included under Item 18a (Any other business) on the Agenda, as the outcome of this would affect most other items on the

Agenda. This was agreed unanimously (10-0). It was also agreed unanimously (10-0) that Item 6 would follow immediately, allowing the new Chairman to take over the meeting.

18a Proposal to amend the current requirements for absentee voters as set out in Paragraph 7.3 of the Constitution

Kim Cook explained that, although Paul Witheridge (Marlow) had agreed to continue accepting email votes under the existing system, Paul's resignation from the Witheridge FHS, with effect from 18 May 2010, meant that this was not a satisfactory situation. Six members, confused over the procedures for absentee voting, had sent email votes to Kim at the Witheridge1987 email address, knowing that the AGM was to be held her home. These votes had been verified as being from paid-up members, and none were duplicated, therefore fulfilling the basic essentials for voting. All present agreed that it would be unfair to disenfranchise those members who had taken the trouble to vote, and all wanted to ensure that these voters could feel part of the decision-making process of the Society. Barbara Finemore then proposed that the provisions of Paragraph 7.3 be set aside, that the votes of the six absentee voters be counted in this year's voting, with the Committee to oversee the institution of a new absentee voting system in time for the 2011 AGM. This was seconded by Roy Cook and passed unanimously (10-0).

6 Election of Officers and Committee Members

All the Officers and Committee members previously proposed as listed in the Agenda, were voted in unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee). The new Committee is therefore as follows:

Chairman	Jason Cook
Vice Chairman	Richard Witheridge
Secretary	<i>as no nomination was received prior to, or during, the meeting, the Committee will endeavour to co-opt a Secretary as soon as possible. Meanwhile, other Committee members will undertake essential secretarial work as and when needed.</i>
Membership Secretary	Richard Witheridge
Treasurer	Richard Witheridge
Assistant Treasurer	Maureen Witheridge
Editor and Publisher	Kim Cook
Research Co-ordinator	Kim Cook
Webmaster	Paul Witheridge (Canada)
Committee Members	Pamela Glynn Roy Cook

Immediately following his election as Chairman, Jason Cook took over as Chairman of the meeting.

When all Committee elections were completed, he thanked all past Committee members for their work, and went on to thank the newly-elected Committee members for their willingness to work for the Society, expressing his confidence that the new Committee would move forward in a positive and amicable way. The meeting then returned to discussion of Item 3.



Left to right: Liz Davey, Barbara Finemore and Terry Finemore at the AGM

3 Minutes of the 2009 AGM, held at Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden on 3 July 2009

These had been published in the Spring 2010 issue of *Witheridge Times*, with additional copies available at the meeting. Barbara Finemore proposed accepting them, seconded by Alan Smith, and acceptance of the minutes was unanimous (10-0 present, 4-0 absentee).

4 Matters arising from these Minutes

Questions were asked about the extension of subscriptions, as discussed under Any Other Business at the 2009 AGM, and implemented by the Committee in December 2009. However, no clear answers could be given on how many members were in good standing at the relevant time, and had therefore had their subscriptions extended. All the relevant documents (accounts, bank statements, and membership records) were still in the hands of Paul Witheridge (Marlow), and the Society was therefore without access to the necessary information. Paul had asked for the material to be collected by courier, but had not yet confirmed a convenient date. Once the documents had been sent to Kim Cook, and then passed on to Richard Witheridge, Richard would identify the extended subscriptions as speedily as possible, and advise all those whose subscriptions needed to be paid. He would then supply the Committee with up-to-date information on anticipated income for this year and next. As other matters arising from the Minutes were included in later items on the Agenda, discussion on these was deferred until the relevant Agenda items were debated.

5 Matters arising from 2010 Officers' Reports

These had been published online in the Spring 2010 issue of *Witheridge Times*. While the meeting acknowledged that there was no option but to accept these Reports formally, many of those present expressed concerns about the accuracy of the Editor's Report, given the note by Richard Witheridge (as Chairman for 2009-2010) refuting the alleged 'sacking' of the Editor as claimed in that Report. Kim Cook noted further inaccuracies concerning the alleged shortage of material for *Witheridge Times*. She had already produced interim issues for Winter 2009 (using material that had been available in 2008), and for Spring 2010 (using material available in 2009). There was still a considerable amount of further unused material, with some items dating back to 2008. Kim also confirmed that there had been contributions from a number of members, not just the two mentioned in the report. In light of these inaccuracies, while the meeting accepted all Reports, there was a unanimous decision (10-0) to minute the reservations about the accuracy of the Editor's Report, with one absentee voter accepting other Reports but declining to accept the Editor's Report.

6 Election of Officers and Committee Members

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting, *see above*.

7 Overseas Representatives

All the nominated representatives had agreed to continue in post, and members were delighted to accept their offer. No vote is required on this, but the Chairman expressed his thanks for the continuing hard work and loyalty of our Overseas Representatives, and proposed a vote of thanks, which was carried unanimously (10-0).

8 Appointment of Auditor

The appointment of Ron Dixon as Auditor was proposed by Philip Milnes-Smith, seconded by Zoe Cook, and passed unanimously (10-0 present, 5-0 absentee).

Roy Cook (left) and Philip Milnes-Smith at the AGM



The meeting also recorded a unanimous vote of thanks (10-0) to Ron for taking up the Auditor's reins again this year, following his serious accident shortly before the 2009 AGM. Everyone expressed their pleasure that Ron had recovered so well, and was now able to resume the auditor's duties which he has performed so faithfully over many years.

9 **Vote of thanks to retiring Officers**

Proposed by Kim Cook, seconded by Pamela Glyn

A vote of thanks to Paul & Beryl Witheridge for all their hard work in recent years, with an appropriate gift, was passed unanimously (10-0 present, 5-0 absentee). However as Paul had specifically said that no gift would be accepted, Kim Cook proposed that the Society should make a donation of £50.00 in lieu to Diabetes UK, a charity which Paul & Beryl support. This was seconded by Richard Witheridge, and passed unanimously (10-0 present, 2-0 absentee).

10 **Proposal to revoke the effects of Item 9 (Referendum) from the 2009 AGM**

Proposed by Brenda Dixon, seconded by Roy Cook

The meeting recognised that the work involved in this 2009 decision was a key factor in the Society's difficulty in recruiting a Secretary. Some provisions of the Referendum proposal were already being put in place. Force of circumstances had led to the email distribution of the last two issues of *Witheridge Times*, and matters of quorum and membership were next on the current Agenda. The provision of an Internet forum for all members had been discussed by members of the 2009-2010 Committee, and efforts were under way to put this in place. The meeting agreed unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee), that a Referendum was no longer necessary, but could be revisited in 2011 should members feel this to be necessary.

11 **Proposal to amend section 4 of the Constitution in order to widen membership**

a) to include those related by marriage to, or having strong ties with, any Witheridge/Wetheridge family.

Proposed by Jason Cook, seconded by Richard Witheridge

Some members had been unaware that the Constitution did not allow Witheridge step-children or foster children to be members, and all agreed that this should be remedied. The advantages of allowing those with other ties, whether by marriage or close association, to join, was also recognised, and the proposal to widen membership was agreed unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee).

b) to amend Section 4.3 of the Constitution to allow Honorary Membership to those who will assist the Society by fulfilling an administrative role, subject to the proviso that only two Committee posts may be held at any one time by such honorary members.

Proposed by Jason Cook, seconded by Richard Witheridge

The meeting accepted that, as Honorary Membership was already allowed for those who had performed valuable service in the past, there was no reason to refuse it to anyone willing to undertake specific



Alison and Alan Smith at the AGM

future duties for the Society. Jason Cook pointed out that the Society was not in a position to pay anyone to take on tasks Society members were unable to fulfil, but we could provide such Honorary Members with other benefits, including free meals at Witheridge gatherings, and free help with their own family history research. Kim Cook said she would be happy to do free research for anyone helping the Society by

taking on a Committee post. It was confirmed that Honorary Members are not entitled to vote at either Committee or General Meetings. The proposal was passed unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee).

12 Proposal to amend section 7.5 of the Constitution to include on-line voters in the quorum for a General Meeting

Proposed by Joyce Browne, seconded by Maureen Witheridge

During the run-up to the AGM, there had been discussion of this proposal on the Committee Internet forum, which had been widened to include all proposers and seconders of Agenda items. As some forum participants had apparently misunderstood the implications of this proposal, the Chairman, who had been included in the forum, made these clear. The proposals would in no way reduce the number of votes needed to pass an Agenda motion. A minimum of eight voters would still be needed. The only difference would be that at least four of these, rather than all eight, would need to be physically present in the room at the time. The remainder of the quorum could be comprised of absentee voters. Given that the Society planned to have a members' forum in place before the next AGM, any objections about the ability of absentee voters to be party to discussions, were overcome. The meeting agreed that this option of including absentee voters in the quorum, originally suggested by Paul Witheridge (Marlow) at the 2009 AGM, would eliminate difficulties in achieving a physical quorum of eight. A number of those present pointed out that, in the current economic climate, with the likelihood of further financial constraints of raised taxation and increased travel costs, the problems of achieving a physical quorum were likely to become greater. Furthermore, the fact that absentee voters could be included in the quorum would help members, particularly those outside the UK, to feel more closely involved in the Society's management. The proposal was approved unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee).

13 Proposal to publish *Witheridge Times* on the Members-Only section of the Witheridge FHS website

Proposed by Kim Cook, seconded by Richard Witheridge

Kim Cook advised the meeting that, as of that day, the Members-Only section of the Witheridge FHS website had been closed down by Paul Witheridge (Marlow). However, the Society was keen to find someone to resurrect this, as it had been an important part of the Society's communication system. The meeting agreed that email distribution of *Witheridge Times*, eliminating print and postage bills, previously the largest part of the Society's expenditure, had been a key factor in maintaining the Society's financial stability. Electronic distribution also has the advantages of making it possible to include colour content, and of ensuring that overseas members receive their copies without delay. However, as some members had failed to acknowledge receipt of the two issues emailed so far, the Membership Secretary would make further efforts to determine how many members are receiving *Witheridge Times* successfully this way. Those who cannot receive the files by email would be asked if they wished to nominate an alternative email address, or to have a black-and-white copy, computer printed and unstitched, posted to them. Despite some comments from members (present and absentee) who loved receiving *Witheridge Times* in the mail, they, and all voters, accepted that email distribution and putting each issue on the website, combined to provide the best practical way forward for the Society. The meeting agreed the desirability of posting issues on any future Members-Only section of the website, subject to the proviso that as each issue was removed after one year, it should be electronically archived. The motion was passed unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee).

14 Proposal to thank those who run the Witheridge FHS website, and for the Witheridge FHS to take over payment of all website fees.

Proposed by Kim Cook, seconded by Maureen Witheridge

Since this proposal was made, the resignation of Paul Witheridge (Marlow) had led to the closing down of the current Members-Only section of the website, which means that the Society will, *de facto*, be taking over the fees and costs for this section of the website once it is reinstated.

It was also recognised that, as the membership fees for Paul Witheridge (Canada), were covered by his payment of website fees, this arrangement means that the membership extension would in effect be a loss to him. It was agreed that the fees paid by him this year would be reimbursed, so that he would not lose out in the membership extension. Richard Witheridge, as Treasurer, would

contact Paul (Canada) to determine the amount we need to pay him for this year, and details of the hosts/providers the Society will need to pay in future. The proposal, including a vote of thanks to Paul (Canada) and Paul (Marlow) was passed unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee).

15 Proposal to reinstate the Society's membership of the Federation of Family History Societies and to retain membership of the Guild of One-Name Studies

Proposed by Richard Witheridge, seconded by Alan Smith

The merits of membership of these organisations were discussed. The Federation provides extensive support to member societies, including public liability insurance for all Committee and General meetings. It was unfair to expect those members who agree to host such meetings, to cover the insurance costs, and to bear the penalties should any claim be made. Kim Cook also conveyed the Federation's willingness to help us find a Secretary from within the ranks of its membership, should one not be forthcoming from our own membership.

In answer to a question about referrals from the Guild of One-Name Studies, Kim admitted that she was not aware of any referrals being received in recent years. However, in recent discussions with Guild personnel, it had emerged that the Witheridge entry on the Guild's website had so far failed to take advantage of most of the facilities the Guild offers its members. Most Guild members make use of available pages on the Guild website to explain more about their status (individual, informal group or fully constituted), the coverage of their research, and to provide information about the number of certificates and other documents held. These always receive many more enquiries and referrals than the few (like ours) which currently list simply a contact point.

The Guild had also explained that, while any number of individuals researching a given name could be members of the Guild, only one could hold the main listing for a given surname. No other individual may take over that listing unless and until the existing holder gives it up, at which time the listing could be offered to another Guild member researching the name. Paul Witheridge (Marlow) had elected to give up his tenure as holder of the Witheridge One-Name listing, but at the time of the AGM this had yet not been done. Meanwhile, the Society would need to nominate one of its members as a member of the Guild, so that the listing could pass immediately to that member when Paul (Marlow) relinquishes it. The meeting voted unanimously (10-0 present, 6-0 absentee) in favour of the motion, with those present adding a recommendation that the Society nominate either the

Research Co-ordinator or Membership Secretary as a Guild member. It was also suggested that the Committee look at possible ways of ensuring that the main listing for the Witheridge surname remains with the Witheridge FHS in future, although there was some doubt that this could be done within the current structure of the Guild.

16 Christmas Card Charity for 2010 to be the National Autistic Society
Proposed by Alan Smith, seconded by Roy Cook

In recent years the Society had established a tradition of sending charity Christmas cards sold to raise funds for charities which Witheridge FHS members had specific reasons for supporting. This year Alan Smith had proposed the National Autistic Society. This proposal was passed unanimously (10-0 present, 5-0 absentee).

17 Date and Venue for 2011 Reunion

Proposed by Pamela Glynn, seconded by Jason Cook

It was agreed that, as the past three meetings had been held in Kent, it was time to hold the next AGM in a more westerly location, preferably somewhere in the Wiltshire/Dorset/Somerset area, and if possible close to the A303. The suggested dates of 4 & 5 June or 11 & 12 June were also agreed, subject to recognising that the first of these weekends follows immediately on Spring Bank Holiday weekend. It was also agreed that the Society would not attempt to organise any joint hotel bookings, or to book coaches or outings well in advance of the AGM, but to leave these decisions until the choices of those attending had been taken into account. The proposal was passed unanimously (10-0 present, 3-0 absentee), leaving the Committee to determine, as swiftly as possible, the precise date and location.

18 Any other business

a) Proposal to amend the current requirements for absentee voters as set out in Paragraph 7.3 of the Constitution

This was discussed immediately after Item 2 on the Agenda, *see above*

b) Informal Society Meetings

The AGM was advised of two possible informal Society gatherings later in the year.

The first is being planned for late July, once the Society's property that is still in the hands of Paul Witheridge, has been sent by courier to Kim Cook. Kim & Roy have agreed to meet up with Richard & Maureen, probably somewhere in Dorset, Somerset or Wiltshire, to hand over the documents needed by Richard & Maureen. They hoped that Pamela & Derek Glynn would be able to join them, and other members in the area would be advised of the meeting and invited to join. Final details of time and place would not be available in time for

the Summer issue of *Witheridge Times*, but members living in the area would be contacted directly. It was also possible that this get-together could be used to consider venues for the 2011 reunion.

The second is planned for late September, when Jim Witheridge and David Torborg will be in Southampton for a few days. Paul and Kathy Witheridge (Canada) expect to be in England then, and have already expressed the hope that they will be able to join the gathering. Details would be notified nearer the time.

c) Identifying and expanding the Society's skills pool

A number of members expressed concern that we currently have limited identified availability of specific skills within the Society. We currently have only one identified IT expert, Paul Witheridge (Canada), and only one identified Editor/Publisher, Kim Cook, and there is an ongoing need to identify someone willing to act as Secretary.

To ensure smooth running, the Society needs to identify other members with the relevant skills who would be willing to shadow existing Committee members, not just in these areas, but also in finance, keeping membership records, and in family history research. There is a real need to expand the skills pool, either through recruitment of new members, or by training existing ones. While a number of members have good IT skills, many are in specialist fields not relevant to the Society's needs. We particularly need someone who can help us reinstate the Members-Only section of the website, and set in motion two Internet forums, one for the Committee and one for the Society as a whole. All present agreed that any new systems needed to be much simpler than those previously in use. Kim Cook said that, if necessary, she would be willing to train other members in the use of desk-top publishing, to ensure that someone would be available to take over from her as and when required.

The meeting voted unanimously (10-0) in favour of a proposal by Alan Smith, seconded by Roy Cook, to authorise the Committee to take the necessary steps to simplify IT procedures, and to identify and expand the skills pool.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.40 pm, with an informal vote of thanks being given to Jason Cook, the new Chairman, who in turn thanked all those who had contributed to the meeting and made it such a pleasant and productive occasion.

Note: Voting figures show the number of votes for and against, for both present and absentee voters. On certain items some absentee voters did not indicate a decision for, against or to abstain. This is reflected in the reduced number of absentee votes listed for the item. Where an impromptu motion (eg a vote of thanks) was added, the voting figures relate only to those present.

Meet the Team — Part 1!

Following the 2010 AGM, we thought it would be a good idea to introduce the team members who have volunteered to help run the Witheridge FHS for the coming year. While some members will already know many of our team personally, there will undoubtedly be some who don't, so here's the first batch!

Jason Cook, Chairman

Jason was born in Surrey in 1968, the elder son of **Roy and Kim Cook**, and grandson of **Marjorie Witheridge**, from the Wembury branch.

His early years were spent in Morden and Sutton, in Surrey, and West Wickham, in Kent. For many years he was a keen, and highly-graded, chess player, playing for school and county.

Jason grew up with Witheridge family history, and was at the first Witheridge gathering in 1987. In May 1992 he brought Zoe to her first Witheridge reunion, shortly before their wedding in October that year. Zoe is a registered child-minder and first-aider, and they live in Croydon, Surrey, with their two children, Ethan (11) and Lauren (6).

Jason, who is self-employed, is an expert number-cruncher and keen follower of sport. For many years he played in, and refereed, local football matches, but has now switched to playing in, and refereeing, pool and snooker matches, which are easier on the knees! He also enjoys watching Formula 1 and is (like the rest of the family) an enthusiastic supporter of Chelsea Football Club.



Jason Cook, with Zoe, Ethan and Lauren.



Richard Witheridge

Vice Chairman, Treasurer, and Membership Secretary Richard (left), of the Ermington branch, was born there in 1935, the son of **Henry and Alice Witheridge**. After his mother died in 1936, Richard lived with his Witheridge grandmother, while brother Philip lived with an aunt and uncle in Plympton. When their father remarried in 1947, the family was reunited in South Brent.

In 1951 Richard was apprenticed at Plymouth Dockyard, and in 1958 transferred to Bath Admiralty as a draughtsman. There he met **Maureen Shaw**, whom he married in 1960, and they have three children, Ann, Mark and Susan.

Although interested in family history from early days, Richard didn't start serious research until 1976, and joined the Witheridge Society (as it was called then) at the inaugural meeting in 1987. Since then he has served the Society in many capacities. In 1985 Richard retired as a Higher Officer, and in 2003 he and Maureen moved to Dunster.

Maureen Witheridge, Assistant Treasurer

Maureen (née Shaw) (right) was born in 1938, and lived with her parents, John and Doreen Shaw in Bath. After leaving school, she worked as a tracer in Bath Admiralty, where she met Richard Witheridge, and they married in 1960. Later she gave up work to become a full-time mother to their three children, Ann, Mark and Susan.



Always interested in art, in recent years *Maureen Witheridge* Maureen has taken up oil painting and produced a number of paintings. Throughout Richard's work for the Society, she has given him full support, including taking up various Committee posts herself.

Velma Metcalfe, New Zealand Representative

Velma was born in Kaitaia in the far north of the North Island in 1948. Her sister June was born in 1944. Their parents **Glenath** (née **Witheridge**) and **Ron Hazell** were dairy farmers.

Velma's first job was in the office of the local newspaper, where **Rodney Metcalfe** was the cadet reporter. They later married and moved around the country as Rodney built up a career as a radio news journalist.

Rodney and Velma Metcalfe



For the past 23 years Velma and Rodney have lived in New Zealand's capital city, Wellington, where Rodney currently works for the Radio New Zealand News web site. Velma has worked as a computer operator, data processor and shop assistant.

Velma developed an early interest in genealogy, and is a member of the Combe Martin branch of the Witheridge Family. Her interests are cooking, gardening, reading, movies, walking and the outdoors.



Kim Cook, Editor & Publisher, and Research Co-ordinator

Kim, (left), the daughter of **Marjorie Witheridge** of the Wembury branch, was born in 1943 in Surrey. She trained as a journalist, working mainly on technical journals and non-fiction books. She married Roy in 1964, and they have two sons, Jason and Adam, and three grandchildren, Ethan, Lauren, and Amelie.

Having started family history in her teens, Kim has helped found two family history societies, the East Surrey FHS in 1977 and the Witheridge FHS in 1987. She now works from home as a professional family historian, teaching, transcribing, writing, and researching.

Kim is a volunteer Editor of both the local parish magazine and also of the newsletter for a charity supporting lung patients. Although no longer able to be an active gardener, Kim greatly enjoys planning their large garden, is a keen photographer, enjoys wild-life and bird-watching, and paints, mainly in acrylics. She's also a Formula 1 fan and staunch Chelsea supporter.

Roy Cook, Committee member

Londoner Roy, (right) born in 1943, was bombed out of his first home, but stayed in south London until his marriage to Kim in 1964, when they moved to Surrey. Although their sons still live in Surrey, Roy and Kim had to move from outer London to the clearer air of Tenterden in 1999.



After leaving school, Roy was involved in manufacturing early computers (a 1962 model was 52 ft long!), and later worked in the domestic appliance industry. A natural when it comes to all things mechanical, Roy has serviced and maintained bikes, motorbikes and cars for fun! Despite this, he's a real technophobe when it comes to electronics! He does not do computers or texting!

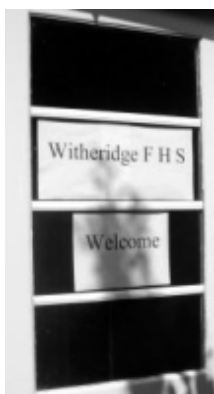
Roy now has his own home and garden maintenance business, and grows plenty of fruit and vegetables in his own large garden. For years a keen motorcyclist, he still enjoys watching motorcycling and Formula 1 racing, but his main interests are wild-life, bird-watching and angling.

My First Witheridge Reunion

by Liz Davey



As one of the two newest members of the Witheridge Family History Society, and living well within a two-hour drive of Tenterden, I decided it would be interesting to attend the AGM and



A welcome sign on the door!

Reunion. The route was an easy one and, using Kim's excellent directions, I was the first arrival.

Right from the start I was made to feel very welcome – there was even a welcome sign on the door! Although it was a small gathering, and there was sadly no-one else present from my Totnes branch of the family, everyone was very friendly.

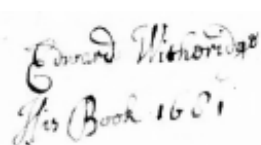
Kim had set out a number of Witheridge documents, trees and pedigrees, and I was fascinated to see the Enhanced Narrative Pedigree for my branch, with my name in it!

After coffee and a chance to get to know everyone, we got down to business at the AGM. Despite plenty of friendly discussion, it finished in little over an hour, and we all enjoyed a buffet lunch of fresh meats, salads and new potatoes, followed by fruit, with cream for those who wanted.

This was served in the conservatory, with some sitting inside, and others out on the deck.

As lunch was being served, our guest, Rob Calder, arrived, bringing with him a 1641 edition of *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, which had belonged to Edward Witheridge in 1681, in which were inscribed number of family birth and death entries.

Rob Calder shows Alan and Alison Smith the 1641 book



Left: The 1681 entry written by Edward Witheridge on a page at the back of the book.

Edward Witheridge was a sea captain who had moved from Bideford to London. As my family has been traced back to Bideford in about 1771, there's just a chance that this Edward might have been my from family! Only time and some more research will tell.

Throughout the day there were plenty of opportunities to ask questions about family history, and Kim has kindly offered to help me with some research on lines other than my Witheridge one. I was also delighted when Kim handed me a copy of the parish register entry for the 1829 marriage of my 3 x great-grandparents, William Witheridge and Susan Brimicombe.

Sadly, I had to leave early on Saturday evening, before the barbecue got under way, as I was going on holiday the following morning. I made it home in record time, thanks to the empty roads, as everyone was watching England's first World Cup game!

I had a very enjoyable day, and hope to attend next year's Reunion and perhaps meet up with even more Witheridges.

Reunion 2011

***The 2011 Witheridge FHS AGM and Reunion
will be held on Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 June 2011.***

The venue for this reunion has yet to be decided, but one option being considered is Somerton, Somerset (right).

This historic town, dating back to Saxon times, is quiet and pretty, yet close to major travel routes. To find out more about the town, visit somerton.co.uk (prefix www.), and let us know whether you think this would be a good venue, or if there's somewhere else you would like to recommend.



Reunion 2012 — 25th Anniversary!

On 1 May 2012, the Witheridge Family History Society will be 25 years old! We think this deserves a very special Celebration Reunion, and would like to hear the views of members as to when, where and how we celebrate. Are there dates when overseas travel is more economical? Is there a particular place you'd like to visit? Please contact any Committee member with your thoughts!

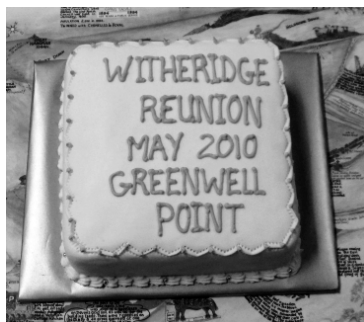
Australian 2010 Witheridge picnic

by Allan & Judith Witheridge

We have just had a wonderful weekend away with a great lunch on Sunday 16 May at Greenwell Point. This is the place where **Philemon Witheridge** and **Mary Carvath** (spelt a few other ways) eventually settled in Australia. They were completely self-sufficient with their 20 acres of farm-land where even a brick-making oven was sited, and of course their fishing. Philemon actually built a boat there and it was still being used three generations later!

Greenwell Point is a delightful place on the Crookhaven River, east of Nowra, NSW. A convict-dug canal was excavated to connect it to the Shoalhaven River, where Nowra is situated.

The weather was just wonderful and we'll ask our son Greig to forward some photos. We ended up having 28 adults and 3 children in attendance. These were (in alphabetical order) Ann & John Egan, Mary & Tom Staples, Rob Staples, Alma & John Templeman, with grand-daughter Thalia, Allan & Judith Witheridge, Bill & Margaret Witheridge, Dean Witheridge, Greig & Karen Witheridge, Joe and Marion Witheridge, John & Hansa Witheridge, Ian & Silvana



A special celebration cake for the reunion

Witheridge, Neil & Rowena Witheridge, Paul & Sonia Witheridge, and Jennifer & John Woolcott. The other two adults were John W's neighbours who had driven him down from Sydney.



At the Greenwell Point reunion, left to right: Rob Staples, Tom Staples, Mary Staples (née Witheridge), Allan Witheridge, Judith Witheridge, and Jennifer Woolcott (née Witheridge).



Witheridge women of all generations at the reunion.

Somehow we can't see us ever forming a separate WFHS group here, but it would be good if more of us joined up with you all. We gave away all the copies of *Witheridge Times* we had so as to whet their appetites.

We're glad to hear that, after a time of difficulties, things are now looking up for the Society. As we age, it becomes more difficult to carry on, and we need our children to take over. We too, aren't very handy with the computer, so will need to get our sons to do all the photo-sending.

Our love to one and all,
Allan and Judith

So that was our group, and double that number couldn't make it for various reasons. Everyone enjoyed the company and delicious Chinese meals served at two big round tables – ideal!

Jennifer Woolcott is now going to put all the photos and info onto computer, but it will take a long time! They had planned a visit to the UK and actually got to the airport but the volcanic ash meant that they had to cancel, but they will try again next year, and plan to visit the Witheridge haunts in their travels.

Judith Witheridge cutting the reunion cake, which sat, appropriately, on a place mat depicting Combe Martin.



Editor's notes:

Special thanks to Rob Staples, who very kindly sent the photos to accompany this article.

We were very sorry that the Woolcotts's plans to visit the UK didn't work out – that unspellable volcano wrecked many people's travel plans! We hope Jennifer and her family get to the UK in 2011, and assure them and all Witheridge visitors to the UK, of a very warm welcome.

The Witheridges of Kent

by **Kim Cook**

based on her presentation at the 2008 Reunion
in Kent, with updates



Part 1

The first authenticated mention so far discovered of the Witheridge family in Kent occurs in 1693. On 12 November that year, in the church of St Mary the Virgin, Chatham, **Sylvester Witheridge** married **Margaret Woodcock**. A Margaret Woodcock, daughter of Henry and Elizabeth, was baptised on 25 September 1670, at Adisham, Kent, but as yet there is nothing to confirm or deny that this was the same person. Eleven months later, on 14 October 1694, their son **William Witheridge** was baptised in the same church.

In a thorough search of the baptism registers of St Mary's, Chatham, I found no other children of this marriage. I've not yet been able to discover when Sylvester died, but a Margaret Witheridge, believed to be his wife, was buried in St Mary's, Chatham, on 21 September 1727. Although we don't yet have any further information on Sylvester and Margaret, we do now have an early and incontrovertible date for the Witheridges in Kent.

I say incontrovertible because there are earlier references in Kent to people with names very similar to Witheridge. Among these is Richard Whittridge or Witheridge, who married, on 13 May 1674, in Faversham. In most documents the name is given as Whittridge. While he may be a Witheridge, this has yet to be proved, and is something I'm still looking into.

For those of us who have been researching the Witheridge family for years, the name Sylvester brings to mind the family of Sylvester Witheridge or Witteridge whose family emigrated from England and became involved in the infamous Salem witch trials of the 17th century. Their story was covered in a 1990s issue of *Witheridge Times*. Was this Sylvester part of the Kent family? The answer, I believe, is a definite 'no'. Sylvester came from Risely, Bedfordshire, and the evidence for this will appear later in *Witheridge Times*.

So where did the Sylvester who arrived in Chatham in the 1690s come from? Why did he come to Kent, and how did he get here?

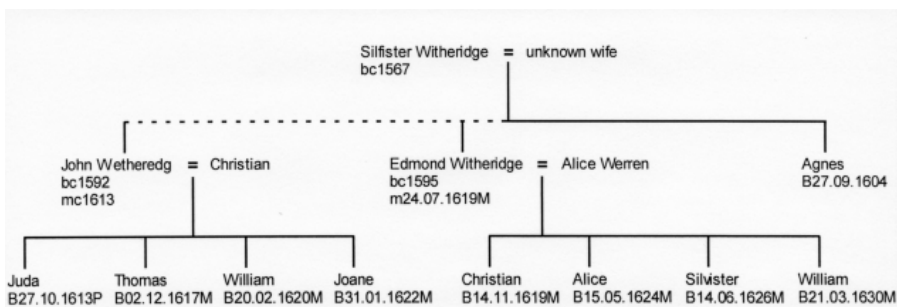
Looking at the how, and the fact that the early Witheridge references relate to Chatham, Strood, Gillingham and Faversham, all Kentish ports, it seems likely that he took the sea route. Given that many of our Witheridges, in both north and south Devon, were seafarers or marine tradesmen, this isn't surprising. And the Witheridges weren't alone in migrating from the west country to Kent, for the 18th-century registers for Chatham include names such as Bowden, Dallyn, Dymond, Tregunna, Vinnicombe, Webber, Widger, and Wonnacott (with their variants), all of which have specifically west country origins.

So far I've found only three earlier references to the Christian name Sylvester being used in any Witheridge family. One is the Bedfordshire one, which has already been discounted.

The second comes from the registers of Plympton St Mary, when Agnes, daughter of **Silfister Witheridge** was baptised there on 27 September 1604. The third, which may well be linked with the second, occurs in Modbury, Devon. **Sylvester Witheridge**, son of **Edmond** and **Alice Witheridge**, was baptised there in 1626.

Given that unusual names tend to run in specific families, it's tempting to think that John and Edmond were brothers, and both were children of Silfister (see conjectural family tree, below). Note that Edmond calls his first daughter **Christian**, perhaps after John's wife, and his first son Sylvester, possibly after the child's grandfather. It's also tempting to think that the Sylvester who arrived in Kent was the grandson of either John or Edmond. As yet there's no evidence for this,

Conjectural relationships of Witheridge families of Modbury and Plympton St Mary in the 16th and early 17th century.



Key: b = born B = baptised c = circa m = married
 M = Modbury P = Plympton St Mary

and we need to discover what happened to John's sons Thomas (born 1617) and William (baptised 1620), and Edmond's sons Silvester (born 1626) and William (born 1630).

Although we don't know where the Kent Sylvester came from, we do know that one grandson and a great-grandson were ironmongers, raising the possibility Sylvester had founded the family business. If he came to Kent by sea from a Devonshire port, he may well have been a supplier of goods to the maritime industry. Just think of all the nails, hinges, locks, keys, catches and other metal items essential to the building and maintenance of a ship, to say nothing of gun mountings and other requisites. So Sylvester's reason for going to Kent could have been that he saw a good business opportunity in the developing Medway ports.

This sketch map (below) shows the location of the main Medway towns on the north Kent coast, and the places we know are linked to the Witheridge family. Changes in sea level in the past 300 years mean that the coastline may have looked rather different when William arrived in the 1690s, but this will give you some idea of the area.

Chatham and Strood were once two distinct towns, sitting on opposite banks of the Medway, but now Chatham has completely engulfed Strood. Up-river is the village of Halling where, on 30 March 1729, **William Witheridge** married **Mary Mills**. Down-stream, where the Medway widens out into the estuary, is **Gillingham**, where a couple



Sketch map of the Medway estuary area, showing today's coastline



Left: Exterior of the old Norman Church of St Mary's, Chatham, during demolition in 1886, showing the doorway through which many of the Kent Witheridges would have passed.

Perhaps some of the gravestones seen in the foreground bore the names of Witheridges.

of later marriages took place. The expansion of both Gillingham and Chatham/Strood in the last century or so, has joined the these towns in one urban sprawl now known as the Medway Towns.

Apart from the marriage of William and Mary, all the key events in their family took place in the church of St Mary the Virgin in Chatham. Sadly, the Norman church the Witheridge family knew and loved was demolished in 1886 (see above), as it had become unsound as a result of 'incursions of the river'. A replacement church, with a fine tower, was built nearby in Dock Road.

Between January 1729/30 and November 1740, William and Mary had seven children baptised in St Mary's (see family tree on page 33).

The first was **William Witheridge** who became an ironmonger. By 1767 he was also a church warden at St Mary's. From 1 March 1767, there is a clear change of handwriting in the registers, and at the end of that page (last entry dated 11 March), it is signed, in the same handwriting, by Edward Penry, Curate. Below this are the signatures of Jno Cazeneuve and Wm Witheridge, churchwardens. The style of the two churchwardens' signatures is similar – flowing, educated, and with flourishes, but William's is a little more flamboyant than that of the other warden. The same signatures are at the foot of the opposite page, which ends with an entry dated 20 April 1767.

During the time when William Witheridge and John Cazeneuve were churchwardens at St Mary's, they became concerned that the parish registers were not being properly written up by the minister, Rev Walter Franks, and were not stored where the churchwardens could have access. There was particular concern that a bastard child, born in St Nicholas, Rochester, had been entered in the baptismal records

of Chatham, and was therefore likely to become a charge on Chatham parish, rather than on Rochester. In correspondence, Franks described William Witheridge as a man who 'seems to be too high-spirited to admit of reasoning'!

William never married, and in his will, dated 22 April 1777, he left all his property to his youngest sister **Mary Witheridge**, then still a spinster. William died in July 1782 and was buried in St Mary's, Chatham on 28 July 1782. His will was proved at London on 18 December 1782.

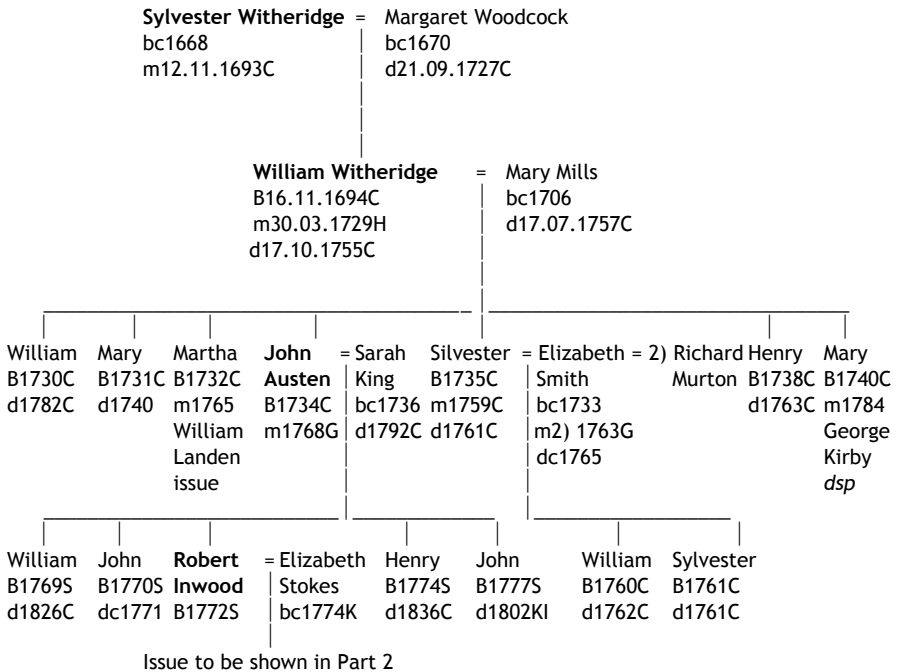
Their second child, **Mary**, baptised on 27 June 1731, was buried in St Mary's, Chatham, on 15 June 1740, shortly before her ninth birthday. Their third child, **Martha**, was baptised on 8 December 1732. She married, on 19 March 1765, **William Landen**. Martha and William are believed to have had at least two children, John Landen, born about 1769, who married and settled in Bredhurst, Kent where he had possibly five children, and William Landen, born about 1770, who married, on 4 March 1800 in Chatham, Mary Tiesdell.

William and Mary's fourth child, **John Austen Witheridge**, baptised on 24 July 1734, became the founder of one of the largest branches of the Witheridge family, and we'll come back to him later. His was probably a late baptism, as only eight months later, on 26 March 1735, another **Silvester** was baptised. In the only Witheridge marriage in St Mary's between 1735 and 1780, on 9 January 1759 Silvester Witheridge married **Elizabeth Smith**, but their story is an unhappy one. Their first son, **William**, was baptised in St Mary's on 19 May 1760. Less than eighteen months later, when Elizabeth was heavily pregnant, Sylvester Witheridge, a clerk in Chatham Dock, died at the age of 25. He was buried at St Mary's on 1 or 2 October 1761. Later that month, on 25 October 1761, their second son, named **Sylvester** after his late father, was baptised. On 23 December that year, just two days before Christmas, young Sylvester was also buried in St Mary's.

Elizabeth's sorrows continued on into the next year, for on 23 May 1762 young William Witheridge, who was just two years old, followed his father and younger brother to the graveyard at St Mary's. In less than nine months Elizabeth had lost her husband and both sons.

It's been suggested that Silvester, Elizabeth and both children died of the plague, but the evidence I have seems to contradict this. There is no indication in the burial registers that any of these deaths was due to the plague, nor was there a significant increase in the number of burials at that time – something normally seen in outbreaks of plague.

The Witheridge Family of Kent, Part 1



Key:

b = born B = baptised c = circa m = married d = died or buried dsp = died without issue
 C = Chatham G = Gillingham H = Halling
 K = Kingsland, London KI = Kurry, India S = Strood
 The line from which present generations are descended is shown in bold.

An alternative, and more likely, possibility is that the death of her husband Silvester induced a premature delivery for Elizabeth, giving the infant Sylvester a poor chance of survival. Whatever caused the death of Silvester senior and their two sons, Elizabeth apparently survived and found some happiness, for on 6 June 1763 in Gillingham, an Elizabeth Witheridge married **Richard Murton**. Various reports give Richard's baptism as either 1737 in Faversham, or 1741 in Newington, near Sittingbourne. The Newington reference claims that Richard died in 1800.

To date, the only Elizabeth Witheridge I've found in the area was Silvester's wife, and I believe it was she who married Richard Murton.

This belief was strengthened when I discovered a baptism record for **William Smith Murton**, son of Richard Murton and Elizabeth Smith, who had been baptised on 23 May 1764 in Faversham. Elizabeth Smith was the maiden name of Sylvester's wife. However, it seems that Elizabeth's happiness was short-lived. On 17 June 1766 in Chatham, a Richard Murton married Mary Wildash. If this is the same Richard, Elizabeth must have died between 1763 and 1766, leaving her young son to grow up in the care of his father and stepmother.

William and Mary's sixth child was **Henry Witheridge**, baptised on Christmas Day 1738. His life was slightly shorter than that of his brother Silvester, for he died at the age of 24, and was buried on 17 June 1763 at St Mary's. The early death of two sons, Sylvester and Henry, might be just a coincidence, but it's possible that there was a genetic weakness that both shared.

In June 1740, five months after the death of their first daughter, 9-year-old Mary, William and Mary had another daughter, also named **Mary** at her baptism in St Mary's on 16 November that year. In 1757 she inherited £350, plus clothing and linen, in the will of her mother, the money to be paid when she reached the age of 21. Whether she chose to reject suitors, or whether this wasn't enough to entice a suitable husband, she remained a spinster for another 27 years! In 1782, at the age of 41, she inherited all the property of her unmarried brother William. Perhaps it was this additional substantial inheritance that finally made her a desirable bride, for on 28 June 1784 in St Mary's, she married **George Kirby**. No children of this marriage have been found – hardly surprising, as Mary was 43 when she married.

If William's father, the first Silvester, came to Chatham to take advantage of business opportunities, he seems to have succeeded famously, for his son did very well in the town.

Neither William nor Mary lived to see the early deaths of their sons Silvester and Henry, for both parents died in the 1750s. William was buried at St Mary's on 17 October 1755, when he was just 61 – not a bad age for those times.

Although we don't have a will for William, we do have the will of his widow Mary, made less than two years later, on 14 July 1757, part of which you can see on the opposite page. In it she leaves specific sums, ranging from £100 to £350, to her six surviving children – sums totalling over £1,500 – as well as clothing, linen and a substantial residual estate. This is clear evidence that the Witheridge family had prospered enormously since their arrival in Kent.

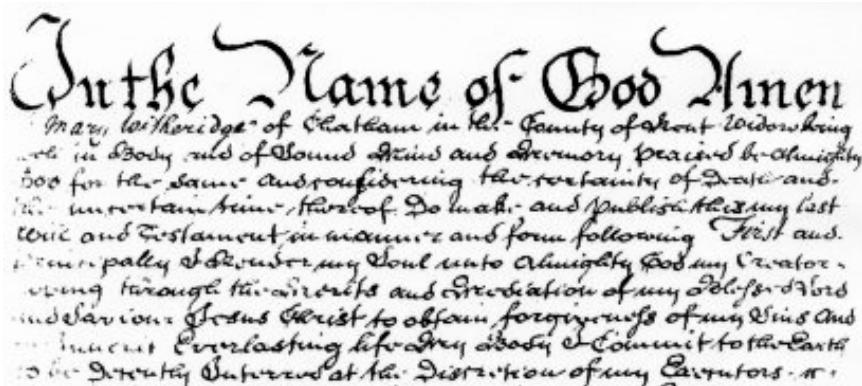
It's interesting to note that for their two youngest, Henry and Mary, both under 21 and not due to inherit until they attained their majority, Mary Witheridge made provision that interim funds be available for the 'maintenance, education and advancement' of both. Here was a woman who believed in the education of girls in an age when this was neither a common, nor a popular, view.

In the opening section of her will (shown below) Mary made the following declaration:

'I Mary Witheridge of Chatham in the County of Kent Widow being [whole?] in Body and of Sound Mind and Memory Praised be Almighty God for the same and considering the certainty of Death and the uncertain time thereof Do make and Publish this my Last Will and Testament . . .'

The illegible word is interesting. It looks like 'whole', and you'd expect it to be a positive word, particularly as she adds 'praised be Almighty God for the same'. But, whether she knew it or not, Mary was very close to death, for she was buried just three days later.

As we've seen, although four of William and Mary's sons were alive when their mother died, within six years two of them, Silvester and Henry had also died. Their eldest brother, William, lived to the age of 52, but never married. So it was left to the second son, John Austen Witheridge, to continue the family line. Yet again, in this generation the family line was almost extinguished, and again it was left to one son to ensure the survival of this family line. The story of how a remarkable and extensive dynasty resulted will be told in Part 2.



In the Name of God Amen
Mary Witheridge of Chatham in the County of Kent Widow being
in Body and of Sound Mind and Memory Praised be Almighty
God for the same and considering the certainty of Death and
the uncertain time thereof Do make and Publish this my last
Will and Testament in witness and form following First and
chiefly I commend my Soul unto Almighty God my Creator
going through the merits and mediation of my Saviour Jesus
Christ to obtain forgiveness of my Sins and
to receive Everlasting life My Body I Commit to the Earth
to be decently Buried at the Discretion of my Executors

Opening paragraph of the will of Mary Witheridge of Chatham,
made just three days before her death in 1757.

Iris Edna Dawson

(Johnson/Nicholls)

20 July 1910 — 13 June 2010

Iris Edna Dawson was the younger of two daughters born to **Samuel** and **Laura Dawson**, and granddaughter of **Samuel Dawson** and **Thirza Ann Witheridge**. Although originally from Ermington, this branch of the family had been in the Plymouth area since about 1810, and it was in Ganna Park Road, Plymouth that tiny Iris, said to be small enough to fit into a pint jug, was born.



Iris as a teenager

When Iris was just 8 years old, and her sister **Violet** 12, their mother died in childbirth, and the baby also died. Iris vividly recalled that when elderly aunts brought the news, the white ribbons were immediately removed from their hair and replaced with black ones. In 1921 Samuel remarried, but his bride was a mere four years older than Violet, so things weren't always easy.

Iris was educated first at a convent, and then at Trelawny High School. She had wanted to go to art school but her father thought this unsuitable. Instead, she became an apprentice hairdresser in a local salon, and was the only apprentice kept on once her training was complete. She also learned wig-making and chiropody. Eventually her father arranged for her to have a workroom in their home in Peverell Terrace. This was one of the first new houses to be built there, and the space designated as a garage became Iris's workroom.

Iris first met her future husband, **Leonard 'Roy' Johnson**, at a Saturday dance at the Mutley Assembly Rooms, and for Roy it was love at first sight. They married in the spring of 1940, and bought the house next to her father and stepmother, who moved to Paignton shortly after. Roy and Iris also moved from Peverell Terrace, renting their house out while Roy served in REME, based initially in the UK, and then in France, Belgium and Germany, repairing tanks. After four years in Milton Abbot, Iris returned to Plymouth, where she was later joined by Roy on his demobilisation.

Iris was a very smart, happy lady, always singing, usually something from Gilbert & Sullivan. She made a happy, loving home for Roy and their two children, **Barbara** (who later married **Terry Finemore**) and **Peter**. In good weather there were picnics in the local park, with the children allowed to choose their favourite cakes to have with their

orange juice. A member of the Mothers' Union, Iris was a keen knitter and dressmaker, and encouraged Barbara to take up embroidery. Meanwhile, Roy continued to work with vehicle maintenance, this time with cars and cycles, and later became a spares wholesaler with a firm in Plymouth.

Shortly after his retirement, Roy's health deteriorated, and he died in 1976. After a while, Iris started to go to art classes, where she displayed considerable talent. Having been denied the opportunity to train some 50 years earlier, she thoroughly enjoyed her new hobby. She painted many watercolour landscapes, which were chosen for end-of-year exhibitions arranged by the class tutor.

About five years later she met **Fred Nicholls**, whom she had walked out with for a short time when she was 18. He invited her out for a coffee, then for lunch, and over a period of weeks they enjoyed days out together. However, when he mentioned marriage, she handed him his trilby hat and sent him packing! He returned some weeks later, apologised, and vowed never to mention marriage again if they could resume their friendship. Six months later, in the spring of 1982, Iris and Fred were married! They had 16 years of marriage, until his death in 1998.

By this time, Iris's memory, hearing and sight were deteriorating, and Barbara and Peter were keeping a careful eye on her. A broken wrist, with subsequent loss of hand control, had already ended her watercolour painting. When both families went on holiday, they persuaded Iris to go into a local care home for a couple of weeks. She enjoyed it so much she stayed on for an extra week, but during that week became unwell. Even after her health improved somewhat, she stayed there, never to return to her home in Peverell Terrace.

Iris Nicholls in 1988



At the time of her death, Iris was just a few weeks short of her century, and plans were being made for a celebration. Sadly, this was not to be. On Sunday 13 June, while at the Witheridge Reunion in Kent with Roy and Kim, Barbara learned of her mother's death.

Although in recent years Iris's memory had become very poor, she still had a lively mind, and will be sorely missed by Barbara & Terry, Peter & his wife Di, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We send our condolences to them all.

News for Family Historians

by Kim Cook, Research Co-ordinator



This is the first in a series giving news and updates for those researching their family histories. Some of these items result from my own researches, while some are from the **Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS)**. The availability of this information is one of the benefits of our membership of FFHS. To avoid creating unwanted hyperlinks, web-site addresses are listed without prefixes. Unless otherwise stated, the web-site prefix is simply www.

Devon parish records on-line

The **Devon Family History Society** has recently made over 857,000 parish records available on line through findmypast.co.uk. These include 363,015 baptism records covering 1813-1839, 271,193 marriage records for 1754-1837 and 223,395 burial records for 1813-1837. On my first search, I found one baptism that I'd been seeking for many years!

Ancestors in London?

For some time the records of the **London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)** have been available on-line to **Ancestry** subscribers. Although LMA holdings don't cover every parish in the London area, the coverage is extensive, and indexed by name. Having, many years ago, spent scores of hours researching the original registers deposited at LMA, searching parish by parish, page by page, the availability of indexed records on-line is a joy!

What's more, you can download the original images of the certificates. One great thing about seeing the originals is the availability of signatures for comparison. For a while I'd been unsure whether two people were members of the same family. Comparing signatures, including those of witnesses, on two marriage certificates, I was able to confirm the two people were in fact siblings.

One word of caution, though. These images are copyright, and should not be passed on to other people. However, I'm adding all the information to my existing documents, thus making a document which I can pass on.

Check out the laws of the land!

The National Archives (TNA) has announced a new web-site listing every law put on the English statute book from Magna Carta (1215) right down to the latest legislation! The address of this new site is legislation.gov.uk, and access is free! So if you want to know when Acts of Parliament relating to the social lives of our ancestors were passed, you can find the details there.

Data protection enlightenment

An announcement affecting all researchers who feel hindered by issues arising from the Data Protection Acts and associated legislation, has recently come from the Council of Irish Genealogical Organisation (CIGO).

CIGO members had for some time been trying to access information about deceased persons from the UK's war-time National Register, held by the National Health Service Information Centre (NHSIC). This National Register, which dates from 29 September 1939, includes dates of death and changes of name of those who died in the UK during WW2. The NHSIC had withheld the information, citing the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. I mention these Acts simply so that anyone else refused information on these grounds will know that they now have an answer, direct from the UK Information Commission!

The Commission stated that 'the Commissioner's definition of "personal data" requires that information must relate to an identifiable living individual. Information about the deceased does not constitute personal data'. The Information Commissioner's Good Practice Team has now been called in to work with the NHSIC to improve its request handling.

So, if you've been stymied by an organisation refusing personal data on someone no longer living, on the grounds that it breaches data protection legislation, try again, quoting this case!

Australian Records (1)

Access to various Australian records, including those for immigration and those for the Australian Imperial Force, is now available at naa.gov.au/collection/research/index.aspx, with prefix <http://> before www. I've not yet used this site myself, but have been told access is free.

Australian Records (2)

In July 2010, Ancestry launched the Australian Birth, Marriage and Death Indexes, featuring the records of almost 15 million Australians dating back more than 200 years to the earliest European settlements in 1788. You can access these records at the Ancestry website, with the suffix [/grouplist.aspx?](#) Access is free to those with the relevant subscription.

Canadian Census material (1)

Canadian census material can be found at automatedgenealogy.com. I've not yet had time to access this site, so can't confirm coverage, but I understand that access is free, and that volunteers are working hard to provide name indexes for the 1901, 1906 and 1911 censuses. Indexing is also in progress for the 1851/52 censuses covering Canada East and West, as well as for the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Indexes, although incomplete, are searchable.

WW1 attestation papers of Canadian soldiers, and details of men who served in the Northwest Mounted Police in the 1880s are also available on-line, at no charge. The site also has a link to the LAC site (see below).

Canadian Census material (2)

The second source of Canadian census information is Library and Archives Canada (LAC), at collectionscanada.gc.ca (prefix <http://www.>), which has on-line images for the following census returns:

1851/52 for Canada East (Quebec) 1851/52 for Canada West (Ontario)

1881 for all of Canada 1891 for all of Canada

1901 for all of Canada 1911 for all of Canada

1906 for the Northwest Provinces - Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta

Of these, only 1881 and 1891 are searchable by name. 1901, 1906 and 1911 can be searched only by the geographic area. Many areas are missing from the 1851 census. Although not indexed by name, surviving entries are for areas of fairly low population, so searching shouldn't be arduous.

A limited transcription of the 1871 census, containing only the details of heads of families in Ontario from Schedule 1, is also on the LAC site. However, it does give reasonable identifying information about the head, as well as the complete reference to the family's location.

The 1861 and 1871 censuses for Canada have not been put on line but have been microfilmed and may be available on inter-library loan, within and outside Canada.

TNA Kew redevelopment in December

The National Archives has announced essential redevelopment work at Kew in November and December 2010. Although the TNA is aiming to complete most of the work during hours when Kew would normally be closed to the public, the Map and Large Document Reading Room is currently scheduled for closure between Tuesday 30 November and Saturday 11 December.

For updates and further information, go to the TNA website, nationalarchives.gov.uk/reading-room-changes.htm.

Still to Come!

There are some fascinating articles in the pipeline including: *The Mystery Mariner and His Lady*; *Witheridges of Kent, Part 2*; *Chelsea FC and the Witheridge Connection*; *A Witheridge Grandson on the Titanic*; *Four Bradworthy Sisters*; *Final Resting Place, Ford Park Cemetery*; *Morden, Minnesota and Middle Stoodleigh* – an amazing coincidence; *For Sale in Salcombe* – a business with Witheridge connections.

Thank you to all those who contribute – but we still love to hear from you, including all your family news! Please keep it coming! **Ed**