

# *WITHERIDGE TIMES*

Volume 24 No 3

Winter 2010

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## *Letter from the*

## *Editor*



Dear Friends

By the time you read this, Christmas will be over and another year almost complete. I hope you all had a joyful and peaceful Christmas, and that the new year will prove to be a good one.

Meanwhile, I'm left wondering where 2010 went! Each year seems to fly by more quickly than the one before. Our Chairman Jason (my son!) has a theory about this. As we get older, each year represents a smaller proportion of our life, and therefore, in a whole-life context, seems to pass more quickly. It makes sense to me, but I just wish there was some way to put the advancing years into slower motion!

It's probably unwise to label a year before it's even finished, but if I had to sum up 2010, I'd say it's been the year of the unexpected. Elections in many countries produced unexpected results, not least in the UK. While many thought we might have a hung parliament, with no overall majority, few predicted the coalition we now have.

The natural world provided surprises too – floods in places that are normally dry, and drought where it's normally wet, unexpected volcanoes and earthquakes, crops out of season, and snow likewise. In the UK, we had snow right across the country in November. Kent, normally mild, with no snow till January or February, had enough snow in November to keep us snowed in (or rather iced in) for over a week!

However, harsh and unseasonal weather is nothing new, as the stories in our weather feature (pages 29-31) show. There's also the final part of the story of the Witheridges of Kent (pages 10-26), plus up-to-date reports of realising a dream (pages 6-9) and a couple of businesses started by a Witheridge (pages 32-38).

It's also time to start thinking about next year's Reunion and AGM in Somerton (pages 39-40). Remember, it's not just for members – you can bring others with Witheridge connections as well. And please give some thought to how you'd like to see the Society develop, and if there's any way in which you, or someone in your family, could contribute to that. Are there any ideas you'd like to put to the AGM?

Meanwhile, Roy and I send you our love and very best wishes for 2011. May all your surprises be happy ones!

*Kim*

# Family News

## New Arrival! (1)

Congratulations to **Derek** and **Shirley Andrews** on becoming grandparents for the first time!

Their daughter **Justine** and her partner **Andrew** are the proud parents of Tilly Drew Richardson-Andrews, born on 4 September, weighing 7lb 9oz. Tilly arrived one day before her mum's birthday, so there'll be two consecutive days of celebration next year!



*Justine, Andrew and baby Tilly*

## New Arrival! (2)

Congratulations to **Pamela** and **Derek Glynn** who have just become great-grandparents for the first time! Grandson **William Glynn** (son of **Andrew**), and his partner **Emily** are the proud parents of **Isabella Catherine Glynn**, born on 7 October, weighing 7lb 10oz, seen below when she was just 24 hours old!

*Isabella Catherine Glynn, just 24 hours old*



Isabella's arrival came amid a welter of Glynn family celebrations, with Pamela achieving her three-score years and ten and son Andrew and daughter-in-law Helen both due to celebrate 50th birthdays.

## Happy Anniversary!

Congratulations to Liz and Chris Davey who celebrated their 30th (pearl) wedding anniversary in September.

Having arranged to have an away-break in Devon, they learned that Liz's sister and brother-in-law were planning a trip to Burgh Island at the same time. Liz and Chris decided to join them for a couple of days, and had a wonderful time at

*Right: The Art Deco splendour of Burgh Island Hotel, off the south Devon coast. Part of Bigbury village can be seen in the distance on the right.*



the Burgh Island Hotel there. During their stay they were blessed with glorious weather, as the photo (above) shows.

As regular readers will know, the family of William George Witheridge, mariner (1829-1915, featured again on page XX), lived for some years in one of the cottages on the island. In 1929, long after the Witheridge family had left, what is now the hotel was built as a private house. Later it fell into disrepair. In the 1960s, the island was bought by someone Kim knew in her school days, who with her husband, had restored the house to its Art Deco glory! It made a beautiful setting for an anniversary break.

During their time on the mainland, Liz and Chris were able to explore several places with ancestral connections, and found some family graves. But as Liz says, they are ‘all lovely places today, though I expect most people had a pretty hard life’.

### **News from Australia**

Shortly after the Summer issue of *Witheridge Times* was published, we learned from Judith and Allan Witheridge that Allan’s 89-year-old brother Jack had died. We send our condolences to the family, and Judith has written an obituary (see page 40).

More recently, Judith has written of how life in all parts of Australia is being affected by climate change.

‘Lake Eyre is still filling from all the rain in Queensland. The desert has lost much of its red and

*A tourist flight over Lake Eyre, Australia’s lowest point and usually an almost-dry salt pan. On rare occasions it fills with water, making an enormous lake, which becomes a tourist attraction.*



is now green, with carpets of wild flowers. Apparently seeds, eggs and embryos lie dormant for however long it takes for the floods to come.

No-one knows how the birds know just when to come. They arrive in their millions to breed and raise their young. All kinds appear, but mainly pelicans and seagulls. Of course, the tourists come too! The day we flew over the lake, there were 17 other planes in the sky!

We continue to have a very wet start to the summer, although Western Australia has had bush fires. Our farmers have had 10 years of drought, and now floods have destroyed their flourishing crops. Cattle and sheep have drowned, or been marooned on high ground without feed. It must be, and is, heartbreaking.

Because of this our fruit, vegetables, and meat are very expensive to buy in the shops, and our traditional Christmas cherries are in short supply. But we mustn't complain, because we're still a lucky country!

We've seen TV footage of your freezing weather in the UK, so our Christmas wish for you is to keep well and warm, well fed and snug.

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## *Reunion 2012 — Our 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?

It has already been suggested that we meet somewhere with strong Witheridge connections. The strongest links are in various Devon towns, in Cornwall and Somerset, and in the area around Birmingham. However, it might be better to avoid tourist hot-spots, and places where accommodation is in high demand for business conferences, as these tend to be more expensive and difficult to book at short notice.

A decision on date and venue will have to be made at this year's AGM on Saturday 11 June. Final nominations for date and place will need to be received by the Committee at least 28 days before the AGM.

Ideally, we'd like to have your views well before then, so that they can be included in the Agenda for the AGM. This will be prepared early in April, so that it can go out to members before Easter, if possible in the next issue of *Witheridge Times*. This will give members who aren't able to attend, the opportunity to vote for their preference.

Please email your venue suggestions to Jason, Richard or Kim.

# *Realising a Dream*

by Jim Witheridge



Cheers everyone! Here's a brief description of the trip David and I undertook this fall. For me it was the realisation of a long-held dream.

On 27 September we flew into Heathrow, where Roy and Kim were waiting to greet us. Friendly faces were just the ticket!



Roy drove the four of us to Eaton Court, our B&B in Southampton. Next morning we took a brief tour of the historic area of Southampton, where ancient city walls stand next to a modern shopping mall (left).

We then drove into Wiltshire, to Stonehenge (right). What an impressive and haunting place! I closed my eyes and heard the din of people from the past as they too came to this site.

Following that inspiring visit at Stonehenge we drove up the road to Shrewton, where we were treated to a lovely tea with the Nixons, long-time friends of the Cooks.



After dropping us back at Eaton Court that evening, Roy and Kim had to leave for appointments back home.

Next day, 29 September, David and I set forth for the Isle of Wight. During my research before the trip I discovered that that was the location of Osborne House and I wanted to be invited to a palace during this trip! We took the passenger ferry to Cowes, and after walking through the town and crossing the Medina river on a chain ferry, we walked 45 minutes up hill to the house.

Osborne House is set in lovely grounds, with massive trees, and well-kept gardens we could walk around (pictured on the opposite page). The house itself did not disappoint either. It was indeed fit for



a queen. I learned that this is the house where Victoria died and we were allowed to view the very spot. We trudged back to our two ferries in a moderate rain, which only one of us was prepared for! Wet, but with good memories, we made our way back to Eaton Court.

I must say that the B&B was very nice and served a delicious full English breakfast with black pudding and kippers. I have become very fond of both over the years. Good black pudding is hard to find in the States.

On Thursday we took the train to Brighton to make up for missing it during our last trip.

Once again our venture was well worth the effort. From the station, the kind that just cannot be found in America, we walked down a busy commercial street to the beach. We explored both the upper and lower walkways [promenades] thinking that this must be what the Riviera looks like! Hotels of every size and description lined the upper road – miles of hotels all ready for tourists.

We walked out on the pier (seen below) where we found the wind was forcing many of the rides to close temporarily. We walked the beach and enjoyed the day. I was surprised to find the beach was not sand, but rather small stones [shingle], but that wouldn't prohibit us from making Brighton a base during our next visit.

I bought a tie for a souvenir, and we caught the train back to Southampton with another good day behind us. I could hardly wait for the next day to arrive.





Friday, the big day, and the major reason for our trip, was upon us. Roy and Kim, in pouring rain, drove from Kent to Southampton just to be able to say bon voyage – a drive that took them 3½ hours!

Two American friends, who were crossing with us, had joined us the night before. They cabbed to the dock while we, with cats and dogs falling from the sky, were driven there by our dear friends Roy and Kim. There she was, the *Queen Mary 2* (above), a huge, floating five-star hotel! This voyage was the culmination of a dream that started in my boyhood with reading about the *Titanic*, and on through the history of the grand liners of yesterday. Now here I was following in the footsteps of millions of travellers heading to New York in grand style.

I won't detail the crossing but suffice it to say I was enchanted! We had moderate seas which only added to the adventure. The slight motion of the water was comforting. Our stateroom had a balcony and ample closet space. Three of the six dinners were formal, and David and I had purchased our tuxedos months before. We learned to tie our bow ties, and we looked the part of gentlemen when we sat for dinner.





The crossing was a seven-day six-night affair, during which time we found our own favourite spots to cosy into, mine being the Commodore Club, on Deck 9 at the bow. One could settle onto a club chair at a window and view the endless ocean, with book and tea at hand.

There was much to do aboard, but I mostly enjoyed activities that I couldn't do ashore. That is just the experience going to sea. We



walked the decks daily, despite winds often in the 20-mile-per-hour range. David (seen on deck on page 12) was even able get a run in, an activity he has pursued this year.

All too soon we slipped under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and were docking in Brooklyn, NY (left).

The third leg of our trip was upon us – New York City. We saw many friends during our visit, in particular

one that David hadn't seen in 27 years! A happy reunion with a chance to meet the friend's two children included. I rented a bicycle and with a friend I rode around the entire perimeter of the island of Manhattan, seeing the sights as I had never seen them before. This was quite a treat for me as I'm an avid biker, riding 3,800 miles this last season.

After three wonderful days in one of our favourite cities we split up for our trips home. David elected to fly home and I, no longer enjoying flying, took the train.

From New York to Minneapolis by train I have to change trains in Chicago. All cross-country trains go through Chicago and mine was no exception. However my niece Rebecca (my brother Tom's daughter, pictured right) is now living Chicago, the home city of my youth. I made arrangements to see her, and took a hotel for a one-night stay. We had a pleasant dinner, and I was able to see her apartment in the Wrigley neighbourhood.

The next day I boarded my train for home and when I arrived at the station, there was David waiting to pick me up. We were both home, with one of those trips of a life-time complete. Good memories of people and events that will last us the rest of our lives.



# *The Witheridges of Kent*

by **Kim Cook**

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



Part 1 of this article told the story of **William Witheridge**, born in Chatham in 1694, son of **Sylvester Witheridge** and his wife **Margaret Woodcock**. William and his wife **Mary Mills** had seven children, all baptised in St Mary's, Chatham, between 1730 and 1740. Of their three daughters, one died young, one married late, and only one had children. Of their four sons, two never married. Another, named Sylvester, after his grandfather, married and had two sons, but he died at the age of 25, and within nine months of his death, both his sons were also dead.

## Part 2

Of William and Mary Witheridge's four sons, only one, **John Austen Witheridge**, born in 1734, went on to found a substantial family. In 1757 he received £300 (an impressive sum at that time) from the will of his mother. On 11 May 1768 in Gillingham, John, an ironmonger like his father, married **Sarah King**. After the marriage, the couple lived for many years in Strood, just across the river from Chatham, where their five sons were baptised, but it seems likely that at some time in the 1780s they returned to Chatham, where John continued in the family business as an ironmonger.

Incidentally, in the Spring 1993 issue of *Witheridge Times*, it was suggested that the **Mary Witheridge** who witnessed the marriage of John Austen Witheridge to Sarah King, was his mother, but as she'd died nine years earlier, it must have been his younger sister.

It was also suggested that the name Inwood, given to many of John and Sarah's descendants, came from Sarah King's family. However, the 1757 will of Mary Witheridge (née Mills) names among her executors her 'brothers **William Mills** and **Robert Inwood**'. In those days the term brother could imply a brother-in-law, half-brother or stepbrother, and any one of these possibilities could explain Robert's different surname. So the Inwood name seems to have come from the Mills side of the family.

John and Sarah's five sons were **William Witherage**, baptised 9 April 1769, **John Witheredge**, baptised 4 November 1770 who died before 1777, **Robert Inwood Wetheridge**, baptised 29 March 1772, Strood, **Henry Witheredge**, baptised 22 May 1774, and another **John Witheridge**, baptised 20 July 1777.

In 1784, John Wetheridge, father of these children, was listed in Bailey's British Directory as an 'iron monger, metal works' in Chatham.

On 26 September 1788, this John, 'being of sound and perfect mind, and understanding, altho' in a sick and poor state of health', made his will. The wording shows that he was a man of firm faith, for he writes 'I commend my soul to Almighty God my Creator through the Mediation of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ', a more explicit statement than the usual one preceding a will.

John left everything he owned to his 'dear and loving wife Sarah', appointing her as his sole executrix. He died soon after, aged 54, and was buried in St Mary's, Chatham, on 5 October. In a book of obituaries prior to 1800, compiled by **Sir William Musgrave** and published by the Harleian Society, there is a reference (GM 936), to John Witheridge, ironmonger, who died in Chatham on 27 September 1788, but I have not yet been able to view this entry.

On 4 June 1789, Sarah made her own will, leaving everything in trust for the 'maintenance clothing education and plying out' of her four sons, William, Robert Inwood, Henry and John, during their respective minorities, naming as trustees **Michael King**, shipwright and **John King**, carpenter, both of Sheerness. Her estate was to be divided



*This photo of Chatham High Street, although taken in about 1900, shows some of the early timber properties surviving from the days when the Witheridge family first went there.*

*It is tempting to think that one of these buildings might even have been the shop where John Witheridge ran the family ironmongery business, and where he lived with his wife Sarah and their children.*



*St Mary's Church, Chatham, c 1790, as it would have been at the time Sarah Witheridge was buried there.*

equally, share and share alike, between the four sons as each reached the age of 21. From the listings in her will, it's clear that Sarah's estate was considerable, and all four sons would have had a good financial start to their adult lives. Sarah was buried at St Mary's Church on 2 March 1792.

At the time of Sarah's death, the surviving children would have been 21, 19, 17 and 14. Five years later, by then 24, **Robert Inwood Witheridge** had moved to London, but John and Sarah's eldest son, **William**, and his younger brother, **Henry**, both stayed in Chatham and prospered, with William becoming a surgeon.

For some time we had no idea what had happened to the youngest son, John. He was mentioned in his mother's will when it was made in 1789, and so was assumed to have been alive at the time.

In 2009 I was researching Witheridges who had lived in India, and ordered a copy of a will of a **John Witheridge** who had died there. When the document arrived, I was amazed to find that it was in fact the will of John Witheridge of Chatham.

At some point John had joined the Army, and eventually became an Ensign in the 84th Regiment of Foot. This regiment, which had been disbanded for a second time in 1783, had been raised for the third time on 2 November 1793 by Lt Col George Barnard. The regiment had served in the Netherlands and South Africa, before sailing for India in October 1798.

On 29 April 1802, in Fort Carry or Kurry, in the Province of Bombay, East Indies, facing death in battle that night, **John Witheridge** made the following sworn statement.

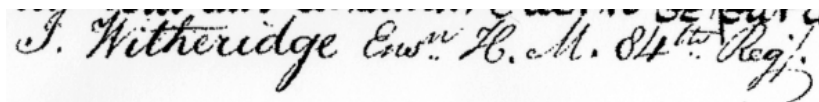
*'As life is an uncertain thing with a Soldier, and as I am as likely to fall in the expected attack tonight as any other officer, I have thought proper to make some little arrangements respecting my affairs at home. 1st, it is my most particular wish that the one half of my property consisting either of money houses or Land be equally divided between my Brothers William and Henry Witheridge of Chatham in the County of Kent. 2ndly the Remaining half of my property to be paid to my Brother Robert Inwood Witheridge of the British Fire Office, Strand, Westminster in consideration of his being in the married state etc etc etc. This to be considered my last Will and Testament and not to be put into execution till my death is positively known.'*

It was signed J Witheridge Ensn HM 84th Regt (see below). John's foreboding was well founded, and he apparently died soon after making this will. He was 24 years old.

For some strange reason, it was almost 21 years before letters of administration were sought.

In 1823 **Philip Pearce**, of East Lane, Bermondsey in the County of Surrey Gentleman, and **Henry Witheridge** of Chatham in the County of Kent Gentleman, swore an oath that they were 'well acquainted with John Witheridge deceased for several years before and to the time of his death and the manner and character of his handwriting and subscription'. The deponents deposed that they did 'verify and in their own consciences believe the whole body series and contents of the said will' quoted in full in the deposition document. The document continues:

*'Henry Witheridge for himself further made oath that the said deceased died a soldier in the year 1802 leaving no parent, but leaving behind him **William Witheridge**, **Robert Inwood Witheridge** the deponent his natural and lawful brothers only next of kin and the sole persons who would have been entitled in distribution to his personal estate in case he had died intestate'.*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'J. Witheridge Ensn H. M. 84th Regt.' The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Signature of Ensign John Witheridge at the foot of his sworn testament.

Both deponents then stated that they believed he had not made any will or other disposition besides the document they had sworn to. Accordingly, on 6 February 1823, admon with the will annexed was granted to **William Witheridge** the brother of the deceased.

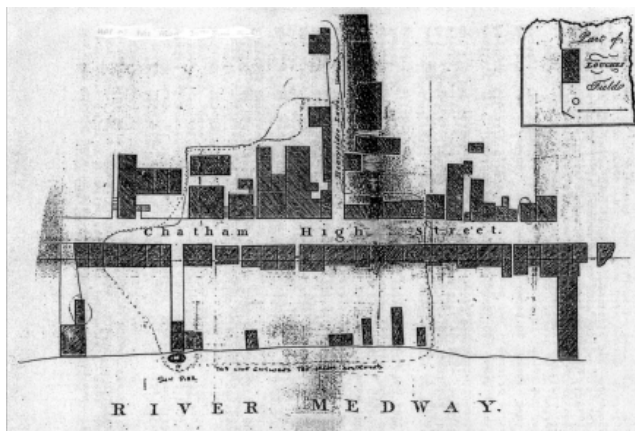
Details of the battle which took place in April 1802, have not yet come to light, so I don't yet know the circumstances in which John Witheridge died.

Searches to find **Philip Pearce** and how he fits in to the story are also continuing. A Philip Pearce of Bermondsey was buried in St John, Horsleydown, on 24 May 1832. His age was given as 54, which makes him of similar age to the Witheridge brothers, and therefore possibly the one who signed the deposition with Henry Witheridge.

Meanwhile, back in Chatham, Henry and his elder brother William did well, and were able to be generous to those less fortunate. On 30 June 1800, in the midst of a heat-wave, fire broke out in a small warehouse behind Chatham's High Street. The fire spread rapidly, and in just three hours, almost 100 houses on both sides of the High Street were destroyed, and four people lost their lives.

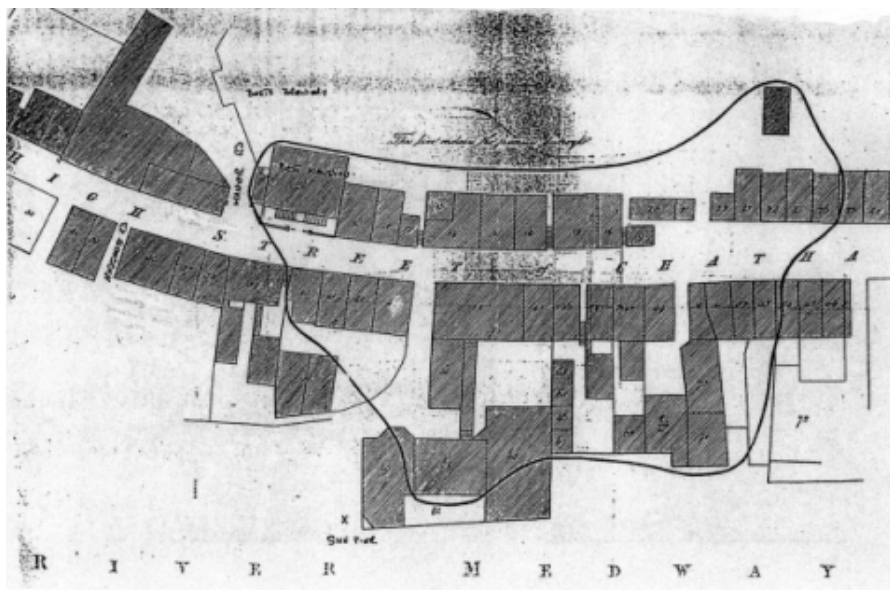
William and Henry must have watched in trepidation as the fire crept closer to their own properties. Fire engines from the dockyard, and troops from the barracks, quenched the flames just in time, as the map (below) shows. The area within the heavy line was completely destroyed.

At a public meeting three days later, a committee was set up and funds collected 'for the immediate relief of the unfortunate sufferers', William and Henry each gave a guinea to the fund.



*Contemporary map showing Chatham at the time of the 1800 fire.*

*The dotted line encloses the area from the bank of the river Medway, across the High Street and into the area behind, that was totally destroyed.*



Ironically, in the second fire, on 3 March 1820, which destroyed a considerable length of Chatham High Street (see map above), both brothers were themselves among the losers.

This time the fire had started in a bakehouse in the High Street itself, and spread to Heaviside Lane, on the landward side of the High Street. Again, a relief committee was set up, and this time it included **John Dickens**, who in 1816 had become a clerk in the dockyard, making his home in Ordnance Terrace, with his wife Elizabeth and their young family, including their second child, **Charles Dickens**.

The area outside the line, includes properties almost opposite one another (on the left of the map) occupied by William and Henry, which were damaged but not destroyed. The distances suggest that Henry's property, closer to the line, was probably more severely affected than William's. A suggestion that William's property was divided into two flats may be misleading. I suspect that part of it was his surgery, and part his dwelling.

William the surgeon was quite a character. He had considerable social standing in the town, and served the community in many capacities. One report, which I've not yet been able to confirm, says that he was elected High Constable of Chatham, and served in that capacity for some years. He was certainly a political animal, getting involved in many local issues.

One of the most controversial issues was that of the Chatham Poor Bill. A few prominent citizens of the town, including a **Mr Jeffreys** and a **Mr Gurr** (one of whom was a lawyer), wanted the Poor Law Guardians of the town (including themselves) to have greater power than the national laws provided, including permission to use for speculative purposes the funds raised by Poor Law Rates.

Poor Law matters were decided by local Vestry meetings, at which not only the Guardians, but all local rate-payers, were entitled to vote. Many of the rate-payers of Chatham were men employed in clerical, managerial and other positions in the dockyard. Dockyard employees were allowed a mid-day break at 12 noon, when a hooter was sounded to announce the break. Anyone who absented himself at any other time during the working day was liable to lose his employment. Vestry meetings were thus timed for 12 noon at a venue very close to the dockyard, to allow the rate-payers who worked there to attend the meetings and vote.

Aware of the strong local opposition to the Bill, Jeffreys and Gurr contrived to change the time of the Vestry meeting from 12 noon to 10.00 am, effectively depriving a large percentage of rate-payers of their right to vote. This added fuel to the opposition flames, and a committee was elected to co-ordinate organised opposition to Jeffreys and Gurney. **William Witheridge** was elected Chairman of this committee, and among those who opposed the Bill were **John Roofe**, **Thomas Wells**, **Dr Tribe**, another local doctor (perhaps William), the landlord of The Chest Arms Tavern, and various tradesmen in the town.

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## Chatham Poor Bill

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Notice is hereby Given

**That the Freeholders, Leaseholders, Parishioners and Inhabitants of the Parish of Chatham, who have opposed the Poor Bill are requested to meet in the Great Room, at**

**THE CHEST ARMS TAVERN**

**On Wednesday, February 20, 1811**

**At Seven O'Clock in the Evening, to receive a Report from the Committee appointed to conduct the Opposition to the Bill.**

**W. WITHERIDGE**  
**CHAIRMAN**



Dr Tribe (whose Christian name is not given in these documents) may have been **Benjamin Tribe**, born c 1788 in Chatham, who lived for many years in the High Street there. In 1841 he was a surgeon, in 1851 a general practitioner, MRCS, in 1861 a doctor and surgeon, and in 1871 a surgeon. At one time he was a Superintendent Registrar of Aliens, and lived well into his 90s!

As Chairman of the opposition committee, **William Witheridge** called a meeting to take place on the evening of 20 February 1811 in the Chest Arms in order to present the results of the Committee's first report. It wasn't possible to have a photocopy of the handbill announcing the meeting, but the typed copy (on the opposite page) gives a good indication of how the original was printed.

A flurry of meetings by both sides followed, often accompanied by derogatory handbills. In 1812, a supporter of the opposition, using the pseudonym **Timothy Quizzall**, penned a witty verse, which quoted the comments of many others opposed to the Bill, including the Comptroller of Customs, dockyard workers, Dr Tribe, **John Roofe** and the landlord of the Chest Arms Tavern.

This verse was published in the Autumn 1997 issue of *Witheridge Times*, when it was attributed to William Witheridge. I have seen the original, and although the signature of William Witheridge appears at the end, the song itself is definitely not in his handwriting. The signature seems to be simply an acknowledgement that William had seen it and passed it on. Intended to be sung to a popular folk tune of the day called *Derry Down*, it is dedicated to the Committee 'by their friend and well-wisher Timothy Quizzall'. Quizzall may have been a thin disguise for Quinnell, a name that appears in Rochester records at that time, or it may simply have been a pun.

The version published in *Witheridge Times* in 1997 also contains a number of transcription errors. Being unaware of these errors, I didn't have that copy with me when I studied the original. I did note a number of important differences from the original, but I may not have captured them all. The amended version is on page 18, and you can spot the names mentioned above. It's easy to imagine mine host at the Chest Arms, and his customers, singing along to this in the bar!

The retaliatory handbill of 1812, (on page 19) sarcastically complimented William Witheridge and **Thomas Wells** for making every effort to maintain the existing rate which was 'no better than a robbery of the poor' and for bringing in 'a favorite as Superintendant at £100 per annum'.

**This song is dedicated to the Committee  
appointed by the Parishioners of Chatham  
to oppose the Poor Bill,  
by their friend and well-wisher Timothy Quizzall.**

Ye Blockheads of Chatham, why make such a stir,  
To oppose the wise measures of Jefferies and Gurr?  
They laugh at your folly; you rant and you rail  
While they're swigging a tankard of stout poor-house ale.

The Comptroller of Customs, make no little rout,  
Says 'The Bill's hatched by smugglers, they now are found out.  
The Bill never can pass on to be Law of the land,  
And is worse than seen liqueur or good contraband.

The clerks in the Dock Yard this Bill do oppose.  
'No Jeffery shall take and lead us by the nose.  
Though of some of the Guardians he makes a cat's paw,  
They'll see how he'll rule if his Bill becomes law.'

Says the wheelwright who makes his wheels firm, strong, and sound,  
'I admire that clause, which relates to the Pound  
Of stray cattle, sheep, horses; 'tis right to take care,  
And the asses the Guardians may find a place there.'

Says the host of the Chest, 'This is far from a joke,  
Such a Bill down the throats of the people to poke,  
When the Bill was preparing Pokerians believe  
The Lawyer's old Friend was not far from his sleeve.'

The Coal Merchant says 'A deep scheme has been laid  
By some of the Guardians who follow my trade',  
While the Water Mill Lawyer says 'Many a flaw  
Can be found in the Bill, which will not become Law.'

The bricklayer comes next, says 'What six months to frame  
A Bill for to govern the Halt, Blind and Lame?  
In less than that time I could build a new gaol  
To lock up the Guardians, who drink Poor House Ale.'

Says the Brewer 'I'm sure 'tis no crime to drink ale.  
I brews it myself, but I brews it for sale.'  
'No', says the Lawyer, 'your ale you may keep.  
I brew at the Poor house and brew my ale cheap.'

But the bold valiant Snob can be never withstood.  
He'd fight up to his knees, not in boots, but in blood.  
Says Bill at the Standard 'the scale will not turn  
And is worse than the Cog Mag, which I used to burn'.

Says that bald-headed Doctor 'No one of my Tribe  
Such a dose for a Parish would ever prescribe',  
While the Clover Street Doctor says he has great hope  
That all rogues who deserve it will dance the slack rope.

The Cordwainer says we should soon have the proof,  
And so says another, I think his name's Roofe,  
'If the Bill becomes Law, Gurr and Jefferies won't fail  
To knock us all down like a lot at a sale'.

So now Lawyer Jefferies, pray take my advice  
'Twill not cost six and eight pence, nor any such price.  
Let the Bill which for six months has bothered your brain  
Be put to the fire, consigned to the flame!

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## NOTICE

### A VESTRY

WILL BE HELD AT

### CHATHAM CHURCH

On Monday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1812

When the thanks of the Parishioners will be given to MR C. D. the Overseer, for his humane conduct towards the Poor, having reduced the Widow's Pensions, took off the allowance of Tea, half the allowance of Small Beer, the annual Fairings, and Rewards from the Children, which has been established for Fifty Years.

TO MESSRS. WITHERIDGE & WELLS,  
for the very Liberal Support they have given to MR. WICKHAM, in making every effort in his power to keep the Sixth on the Rates which was no better than a Robbery of the Poor.

The support of the PARISHIONERS is solicited, to enable MR. WICKHAM, and MR. WITHERIDGE to bring in a favorite as SUPERINTENDANT at £100 per annum and likewise to accomplish their purpose of depriving the People of the Yard from attending the Vestry.

FROM THE PRESS OF W. EPPS, ROCHESTER -

However, opposition to the Bill wasn't confined to such populist means. A five-point petition, to which **William Witheridge** as Chairman probably had considerable input, was sent to the House of Commons. It quoted the voting figures of a meeting on Friday 19 February, at which 88 rate-payers had voted for the Bill, and 304 against, giving a majority of 216 opposed. It alleged that, in spite of this vote, those proposing the Bill had 'convened a private meeting, opened a subscription and have made an application to press the Bill into a Law in Defiance of the Resolution of such Vestry'.

In a move clearly designed to appeal to MPs, the petitioners went on to declare that they considered 'the Present Law of the Land adequate for the government and regulation of the Poor of the Parish, without any additional aid'.

A further objection cited the Bill's plans to invest large powers in the hands of a few individuals, including the right to engage in speculative concerns which, should they fail, would be a burden on the local rates 'for many years, if not forever hereafter'. Also the 'obnoxious' Bill had caused division in the community, would deprive two-thirds of parishioners of their right to be involved in Parish concerns, and the change of timing of Vestry meetings had already deprived many of the right to vote. Their final objection was that those who sought to empower themselves were men who could easily move out of the town if their speculations lost money, leaving behind the less affluent and less mobile members of the parish to make up the losses. I have so far been unable to discover whether the Bill succeeded, but I suspect it failed, as I cannot find an Act of Parliament on the matter.

Certainly the clerks in the dockyard, including **John Dickens**, would have been grateful for William's efforts to ensure they kept their vestry voting rights. The Dickens family left Chatham in 1822, when Charles was nearly 10, but he must have loved Chatham, for in later life, when famous and affluent, he chose to make his home at Gad's Hill in Chatham. I wonder if William Witheridge knew the young **Charles Dickens**.

William, who continued to be an important figure in the Chatham area, acquiring many properties there and in Gillingham, spent his final years sharing a home with his youngest brother Henry, who had also remained single.

William made his will on 2 September 1825. In it, William leaves his many properties in Chatham, Gillingham and elsewhere to his

youngest brother **Henry**, also unmarried, for his lifetime, and after Henry's death, to the children of his other brother **Robert Inwood Witheridge**, who by then had been living in Birmingham for some years. Interestingly, **William** shared his mother's belief in equal rights and opportunities for girls, for he specifies that the bequest is to 'all and every the children, girls as well as boys'. After a bequest of £100 to the housekeeper who looked after him and Henry, he left the residue of his estate to Henry, unless Henry should pre-decease him, in which case the residue would go to his other brother, Robert Inwood Witheridge.

In the event, William died in 1828, and Henry, having made his own will in September that year, survived until 19 December 1836.

Henry's will makes no mention of any occupation or status, but he clearly had some standing in Chatham, though not as prominent as his brother William. He was greatly involved in the work of building St John's Church, Chatham, opened in 1821, serving as secretary to the building committee, and then for many years as sole churchwarden there. In recognition of these services, the minister, the Reverend George Baker, presented him with a Bible 'in two volumes quarto'. Although the church was made redundant this century, in 2004 it was converted into an indoor hydroponic vineyard to produce Pinot Noir wine, some of which goes to Rochester Diocese for consecration to be used in Communion services!

Henry left his 'dear brother Robert Inwood Witheridge', gentleman, all his clothing and wearing apparel, and his 'dear nephew **John Witheridge**' the Bible presented to him by Rev George Baker. In



*This view of the Medway towns, was painted in 1832 by the artist J M W Turner. It shows the strong naval and military presence that would have contributed to the success of the Witheridge family of Kent.*

further complex instructions, he left the bulk of his estate in trust to produce a quarterly income for his brother **Robert**, and after Robert's death, for his widow **Elizabeth**, unless and until she remarried or died, at which time the income would go to Robert and Elizabeth's children, girls as well as boys (again!), and any legally begotten grandchildren.

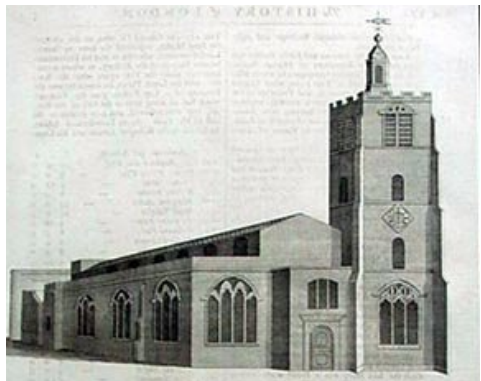
However, at the time of his death, **Henry** had still not finally disposed of the legacies left by **William** to their nieces and nephews in Birmingham, although all had by then attained their majority. On 30 March 1837 John Stephens, one of Henry's executors, was granted, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, letters of administration relating to William's will, on the grounds that *'the said Henry Witheridge alone took upon himself the Probate and Execution thereof and for some time intermeddled in the Goods of the said Deceased . . . The said Robert Inwood Witheridge the other and surviving Executor having first renounced the Probate and Execution of the said Will'*. Why Robert renounced his position as executor, and why Henry was so tardy in apportioning William's estate among Robert's children is a mystery, but there could well be an interesting story behind these events.

Robert Inwood Witheridge had left Kent in his early twenties, within three years of receiving his share of his mother's estate. He went to London, but until recently we had no idea what took him to London, or what kind of work he did while there. Now, thanks to the will of his soldier brother, **John**, we know that, for at least part of his time in London, Robert worked for the British Fire Office, located in The Strand, Westminster.

This may not have been his first job in London, for the records indicate that he wasn't living in the Westminster area in 1801. On 26 July 1796 in St John's Church, Hackney (shown below), Robert Inwood Witheridge married **Elizabeth Stokes** of Kingsland.

It is likely that they had children in the first four years of their marriage, but no records have yet been found. The earliest one we know of is **Mary Ann**, who was baptised on 14 June 1801 in St Leonard's, Shoreditch.

Robert and Elizabeth were certainly living in Westminster





*St Clement Danes Church in The Strand, London.*

by 1803, for on 30 October that year, their son **William** was baptised in St Clement Danes in The Strand (pictured left).

Between 1803 and 1806 the family moved to Birmingham, where three more children were born, and baptised in St Philip's church there – **Elizabeth** on 9 August 1806, **John** on 13 May 1808, and **Henry** on 12 June 1810.

As the family tree (overleaf) shows, all three of Robert's sons married and had children.

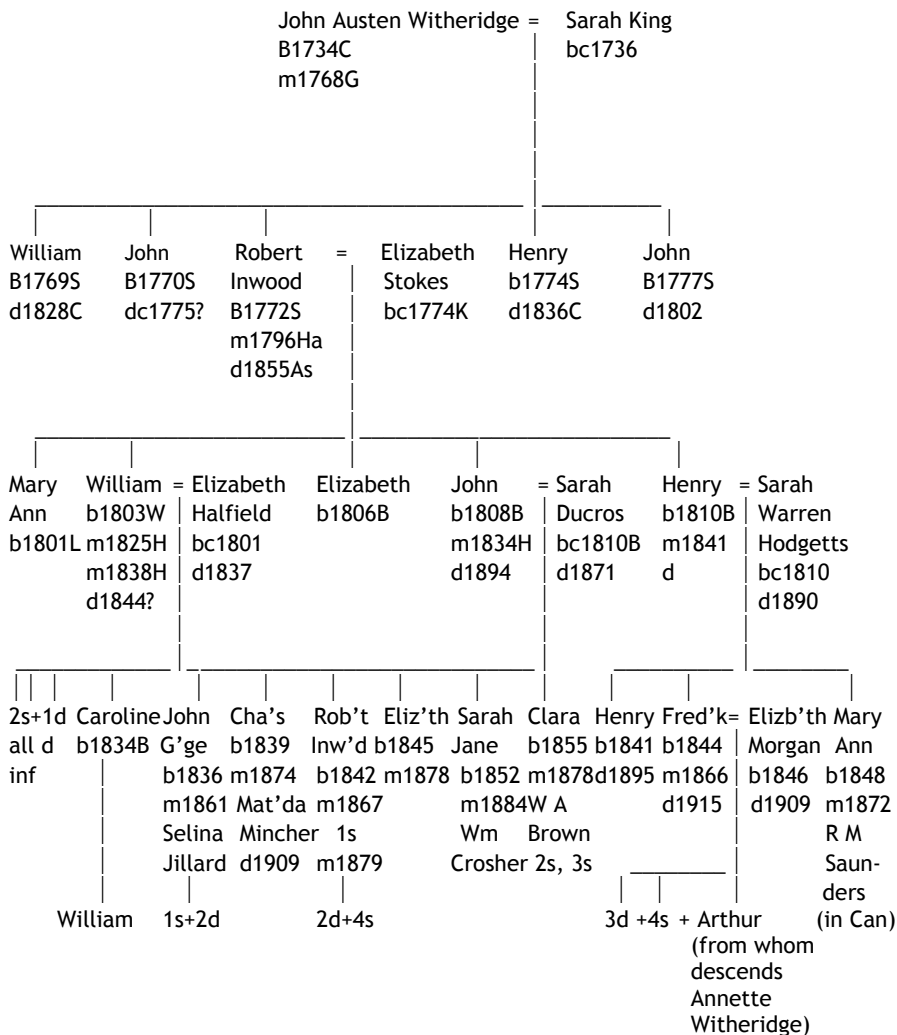
On 3 August 1825, the eldest son **William** married **Elizabeth Halfield**, and both worked as button makers. They had four children, **William** (1827-1828), **William Henry** (1829-1844), **Elizabeth** (1831) and **Caroline** (born c 1836, but not baptised until 1841). In 1837, shortly after

the birth of Caroline, Elizabeth, aged 36, died of cancer. In 1841, William Witherage, a 36-year-old button maker, was living at Howe Street, Aston, but there was no other member of the family with him. Caroline was living with William's parents, but Elizabeth has not been found, suggesting that she also died young. William married his second

*The imposing church of St Philip, Birmingham, where many Witheridge children were baptised in the first part of the 19th century.*



# *Witheridge Family of Kent & Birmingham*



**Key:**

- Events: b = born                      B = baptised                      d = died/buried    m = married  
 People: d = daughter                s = son                              inf = infant  
 Places: As = Aston                    B = Birmingham                C = Chatham        Can = Canada  
           H = Harborn, Staffs        Ha = Hackney, London        K = Kingsland, London  
           S = Strood                    W = Westminster



wife, **Sarah Gifford**, on 30 April 1838 in Harborn, but no children of this marriage have been found. I believe Sarah died soon after.

However, the line is not extinct, for Caroline's son **William Witheridge**, born in 1852, before her marriage to **William Yeomans**, went on to found two very extensive families, whose descendants survive today. In 1844 a William Witheridge died in Birmingham, and although no age is given, this may have been the one born in 1803, as he has not been found in 1851. However, no entry has yet been found in the death duty indexes for that period.

**John** married **Sarah Ducros** and they had three sons and three daughters. The eldest son, **John George**, had two sons and a daughter. The second, **Charles**, married, but had no children. Their third son, another **Robert Inwood Witheridge**, had a daughter. After the death of his first wife, he married **Jane Elizabeth Dencer** and had three sons.

**Henry** married **Sarah Warren Hodgetts**. Their eldest son never married, their daughter's family emigrated to Canada, but their second son **Frederick** (1844-1915) had three daughters and five sons, and scores of descendants, including our founder-member **Annette Witheridge** and her sister **Yvonne**.

In 1841 **Robert** and **Elizabeth**, wrongly indexed as Willoughby (!), were in Garbett Street, **Ladywood**, Birmingham, with daughter **Mary**, single, aged 40, and grand-daughter **Caroline Witheridge**, aged 7, youngest child of William and his late wife Elizabeth. Robert was of independent means. In 1851 Robert, Elizabeth, and Caroline were at 4 Portland Street, Aston, with John listed as a proprietor of houses. John died in 1855 in Aston, aged 82. The death duty registers for 1856 record that his executor was John Witheridge (possibly John George, his second son, as his eldest son William is believed to have died in 1844). Probate was granted in Lichfield, but as yet I've not been able to determine the value of the estate or the duty paid.

Robert and Elizabeth's descendants number hundreds, if not thousands, but so far, we've not discovered any who made their way back to Kent.

Although there were still Witheridge descendants in the female line in Kent long into the 19th century and possibly beyond, the death in 1836 of **Henry Witheridge** brought an end to the male Witheridge line in the county. In the span of 143 years and one month, the Witheridge family had arrived, worked, prospered, become people of substance and importance, and then gone, but their presence and influence left a clear mark on the town of Chatham, its people and its future.

## *Meet the Team — Part 2*

*More details of the people who help run the Witheridge FHS*

### **Judith & Allan Witheridge, Australia Representatives**

Allan Witheridge is one of six children born to **William** and **Rose Witheridge**, and a grandson of **Philemon Witheridge**. Although Allan and his father were born in Australia, the line can be traced back to **Francis Witheridge** and **Ann Eastaway** of Ilfracombe, and through them back to the Combmartin branch.

Allan met Judith Rolfe at Nowra Methodist Church in 1951/2, when a Church was a typical meeting place, otherwise it would probably have been a dance hall! They had both made lots of friends in the different organisations they belonged to, in what was called a four-square lifestyle – worship, fellowship, sport and social activities – which catered for youth in a healthy way.

Judith's father, Ted Rolfe, had known Allan for some time as Allan played rugby for the local team where Ted assisted the coach. Judith had a sister, Margaret, and Allan had his brothers **Bill**, **Tom**, **Jack** and **Philemon** (aka Toby) and a sister, Alma. The Witheridge boys were all fine sportsmen and Alma a first-class tennis player.

Allan worked in the family fishing industry until an unfortunate accident to his father, William, meant that their trawler had to be sold and the boys had to find other employment. Allan went to work for the Shell Oil Company, which was then a benevolent employer, and remained so to Allan for the rest of his working life.

Allan and Judith married on the 20th February 1954 in their church before moving to Mudgee in the central west of NSW, where their first three sons were born – **Greig** in 1956, **Neil** in 1958 and **Ian** in 1961. In 1963 Shell moved them to Wollongong, only 50 miles from their childhood home, which was a happy move, and it was here that their fourth son, **Paul**, was born in 1964. They have lived in their present home in the suburb of Figtree ever since.

Judith studied for a Teaching Diploma and taught at a suburban school for 25 happy years. They travelled extensively at every opportunity, both overseas and throughout Australia, and have wonderful memories (and photos!) to look back on. Among the highlights was their visit to the 10th Anniversary of the WFHS and, as Judith says 'meeting such lovely people – take a bow, if you were there!!'

Allan and Judith have been blessed with 9 grandchildren and, of course, 4 daughters-in-law. No-one is further than an hour-and-a-half's drive away, which is an added blessing, and one for which they remain eternally grateful. Despite a few health scares and the slowing down that comes to us all, they are are content.

### Joyce Browne, Honorary Life Vice-President

**Joyce Rose Browne**, born in Luton in 1923 to **Arthur Harry Witheridge** (always known as Harry), and **Violet May Rose**, was their only child.

The name Witheridge was unknown in Bedfordshire at that time, and from an early age Joyce felt that there was something special about it. Her grandfather, **Francis Robert Witheridge**, had died in Dorset at an early age, with not much known about him. Joyce was surprised to discover that he had been born in Plymouth, and that the ancestral trail led to Ermington.



In 1945 Joyce married **Graham Browne**, whose family came from Norfolk, close to the birthplace of Admiral Lord Nelson. This led to his life-long interest in the naval hero, but Joyce was more interested in the history of Graham's own family.

Keen to discover more of her own family history, Joyce went to the Society of Genealogists in London, where she found details of Kim Cook in the register of research interests. This led to Joyce and Graham coming to the first Witheridge Society meeting in May 1987. Both became staunch and enthusiastic members of the Society, and Joyce was a tireless researcher of all branches of the Witheridge family.

Over the years Joyce and Graham hosted many gatherings in their home in Luton, and held many posts within the Society. Joyce edited *Witheridge Times* for many years, and Graham became our efficient yet genial Chairman.

In recognition of her many years of devoted work for the Society, in 2003 Joyce was made an Honorary Vice President for Life. Sadly, in 2007, Graham died, but despite this great loss, Joyce has continued to support and encourage all of us in the Witheridge FHS.

Throughout the last 24 years Joyce has derived great pleasure from getting to know so many other Witheridge descendants and their families from around the world.

## Ron Dixon, Auditor

Ron was born in Beckenham, Kent, in 1933, and spent most of his childhood in nearby Anerley, a suburb of south-east London.

His links to the Witheridge Society began when, in 1964, at a tennis club in Beckenham, he met **Brenda Witheridge**, younger daughter of **William** and **Dorothy Witheridge** of the Wembury line. At the time Ron was combining a full-time job with studying work-study. Brenda and Ron were married in Bromley in 1966, and have continued to live within a few miles of there. For most of his working life, Ron specialised in Organisation & Methods, working mainly for local authorities, but later as a private consultant.



Brenda and Ron were at the first Witheridge gathering in 1987, and have gradually become more interested in family history, including Ron's Dixon line. In 2003 they hosted the AGM and Reunion, and for some years Ron has been the Society's Auditor, keeping a keen eye on our accounts.

Ron has always been keen on all kinds of sport, and for most of his life has played table tennis, tennis, and latterly, golf.

Ron and Brenda have two children. **Sarah**, 41, who studied Physics, is married to Martyn, and they live in Knutsford, Cheshire, with their two children, Hayden 7 and Maya 4. **Richard**, 36, studied Meteorology, and is now working in risk assessment and living in Blackheath, London. Despite the distances involved, Brenda and Ron manage to see a fair bit of them.

Ron's retirement brings many pleasures, still mainly centred around sport, which, understandably, is now watched rather than played!

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## *Augmenting the Team*

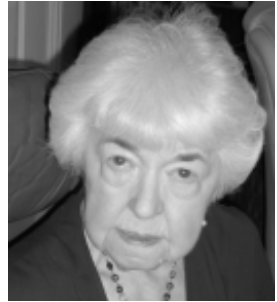
This year we've run the Witheridge FHS with a much reduced team. Many team members have been doing more than one job, and this has been made more difficult without a Secretary. No job on its own is very arduous, and with a larger team we would be able to operate much more efficiently. If you think you might be able to help, even in a small way, please contact Jason, Kim or Richard (details on front cover).

# *Whatever the Weather . . .*

*. . . a collection of seasonal anecdotes*

## *Weather Watch*

*by Joyce Browne*



We British are always grumbling about the weather, but had we lived in Barnstaple in 1606 we would have had even more to grumble about. Robert Langdon, parish clerk of the ancient church of St Peter there, wrote:

*On the 20th January 1606/7 there was such a mighty storm and tempest from the river of Barnstaple with the coming of the tide, at it caused much loss of goods and howses to the valley of two thousand lands besyde the death of James Froste and two of his children. They were in his house which fell down upon them and killed them. This storm began at 3 of clock in the morning and continued tyll 12 of clock the same day. The river was so frozen in January that many hundred people did walke over hand in hand from the bridge unto Castle Rock with staves in their hands and safe as they could goe on dry ground, being the very same month the flood was.*



Years later, another parish clerk, John Sloly, wrote that 'On the 18th day of February 1662 the wind was so hearde [hard] the like was never heard with us in England, which did a great deal of hurt'.

He added, 'In December 1676 frost was so great that the oldest man then living did never know the like for it was so hard frose that many were fraid to roast there [sic] meat for it to eat it because they could not get watter for to boyle the pot'.

What are we grumbling about?

*This recent picture of St Peter's Church, Barnstaple, in winter, shows that weather these days is not as hard as it was in 1676!*

# *Flood, Lightning and Earthquake!*

by Kim Cook

Parish clerks often reported details of local weather and harvests in their registers, so it's well worth looking for these details.

In the 18th century, Roy's Seabrook ancestors were living in Lyme Regis, a port on the borders of Devon and Dorset. The town lies in the valley of the river Lym, meaning a watercourse, from which it takes its name, and in 1248, when the area became the property of Edward I, it became Lyme Regis.

This stretch of coast, now known as the Jurassic Coast, and famed for its fossils, was always prone to severe storms. In the 13th century a breakwater of massive oak beams and boulders, known as the Cobb, was built to ensure safe anchorage in the harbour and the continued development of trade. Rebuilt many times over the centuries, the Cobb is now a sturdy stone structure, still protecting the harbour.

Part of the town, including the church of St Michael, Archangel, once stood some distance from the sea but, as a result of storms and coastal erosion, some of the town was swallowed by water.

With this history of severe storms, it's not surprising that parish clerks added weather reports in their registers. While checking the registers, I found a number of such reports.

For 31 May 1759, an entry records 'the sea flowed 3 times in, in an hour at Lyme'! Forty years later, on 18 August 1797 'the sea flowed in as above, attended with lightning', and just 18 months after that, on 26 January 1799 'the sea flowed in as above, with the shock of an earthquake at about 4 o'clock in the morning'.

Flood, followed by earthquake must have been terrifying for the people of Lyme, who didn't have even our limited understanding of weather. However, it didn't deter Roy's 3 x great-grandparents, William Seabrook and Ann Taylor, from marrying in the parish church there just four months later – for which I'm very thankful!

One of those who survived a later lightning strike was Mary Anning, (1799-1847) the famous geologist and fossil collector.

*St Michael Archangel Church, Lyme Regis.*



## *Not an exact science!*

*For those in Europe and north America, who've battled through the cold and snow in recent weeks, here's a timely reminder that weather forecasting isn't an exact science!*



*A cold winter in South Dakota*

In late fall, Native Americans on a remote reservation in South Dakota asked their new chief if the coming winter was going to be cold or mild.

Since he was a chief in a modern society, he'd never been taught the old tribal secrets. When he looked at the sky, he couldn't tell what the winter was going to be like. Nevertheless, to be on the safe side, he predicted a cold winter and said the villagers should gather firewood. But, being a practical leader, a couple of days later called the National Weather Service and asked, 'Is the coming winter going to be cold?'

'It looks like this winter's going to be quite cold', the meteorologist reported. So the chief told his people to collect even more firewood.

A week later, he called the National Weather Service again: 'Does it still look like being a cold winter?'

'Yes', the man at National Weather Service again replied, 'it's going to be a very cold winter'. So the chief ordered his tribe to collect every scrap of firewood they could find.

Two weeks later, he called the National Weather Service again.

'Are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?', he asked.

'Absolutely', the man replied. 'It's looking increasingly like it is going to be one of the coldest winters we've ever seen.'

'How can you be so sure?', the chief asked, hoping to learn at least part of the secret of forecasting.

The weatherman replied:

'Because those canny Dakota Indians have been collecting shed-loads of firewood for weeks!'



# *For Sale in Salcombe —*

*a piece of Witheridge history*

by Kim Cook

A televised property auction isn't usually an occasion which leads to a family history update, but it happened in our home one morning in February 2010. The TV programme featured three properties up for auction, one of which was in Salcombe, Devon. Having visited there a number of times, I wondered if I could spot familiar places, but it was a name with strong Witheridge connections that caught my attention.

The property up for auction (in June 2009) wasn't a house, but a tiny little business outlet on Salcombe's Fore Street (the West Country equivalent of High Street). Measuring a mere 1 metre by about 3 metres (3¼ ft by 10 ft), with no water or drainage, 78 Fore Street was sandwiched between two larger shops, and had been used as a holiday lettings office. The neighbouring shops were a delightful old-fashioned sweet shop on one side, and a grocer's on the other, and both bore the name **Cranch**, which had cropped up over many years in my research.

I first came across the name Cranch in the 1960s, while Roy and I were on holiday in south Devon. During a visit to Salcombe, we came across a draper's shop called **Leaman & Witheridge**, at 77 Fore Street.

The shop was closed, but next day I phoned and asked an assistant whether there were still any Witheridges involved in the business. She told me there weren't. The Leaman, called Beatrice, had died before

the war, but there was one elderly member of the owner's family still alive. Her name was **Gladys Cranch**. She was in a local nursing home and not able to see visitors.

As I thanked the assistant and went to hang up, she added 'There was a Witheridge until recently, but she died. I think her name was Caroline, and she was 103½!'



*Left: Map of Salcombe, showing the Fore Street, alongside the estuary. East Portlemouth is on the opposite (east) bank and Kingsbridge is to the north.*



In those days, without Internet or mobile phones, research was much more arduous. Even photocopiers were available only in high-tech offices! Most parish records were still held in churches, often in damp, dingy rooms, and searching them was by appointment only, and at a price. It also needed the consent (not always forthcoming) of the incumbent. Even when available, the records were often in poor condition and difficult to read. Census returns beyond 1861 had not been released.

Not surprisingly, it took me quite a while to identify the family concerned, not only because of these difficulties, but because some of the details provided by my informant were not entirely accurate. Caroline turned out to be **Catherine Emma Witheridge**, born Dec qr 1860, and registered as Witherege. Beatrice was **Lizzie Beatrice Witheridge**, born Mar qr 1869, and registered as Lizzy, who had married **William Henry Leaman**.

Both proved to be the children of mariner **William George Witheridge** (born 1829, Bantam) and his wife **Catherine**, née **Pepperell**, who had married early in 1858. Their first child, **Sarah Mary**, had been born later that year, followed by Catherine Emma in 1860. Next came Florence Jemima in 1862, registered as **Jemima Florence Witherage**, followed by **Harriet Annie** in 1865, with Lizzie Beatrice (later known as Beatrice) the youngest. At one time, while William was at sea, Catherine and the children lived on Burgh Island.

Searches of my GRO index transcriptions showed that neither Catherine nor Harriet had ever married. Harriet died in 1932, aged 67, and Catherine outlived all her siblings, dying in 1964 at the grand old age of 103, just as the shop assistant had said!

Florence had married **John Rickard** of St Ewe, Cornwall. Coincidentally, he was a nephew of **William Rickard** who had married **Harriet Witheridge**, born 1826, sister of my own 2 x great grandfather, **Thomas Witheridge** of Wembury. There seems to be no connection between the two branches of the Witheridge family, although they ended up being related through these marriages.

William and Catherine's eldest daughter, **Sarah Mary Witheridge**, had married in Jun qr 1882 (Kingsbridge 5b 411). Working on the name Cranch mentioned by the shop assistant, on my next visit to the GRO, I checked the marriage entries for Cranch, to see if anyone of that name had married in the same quarter, with the same reference.

The hunch paid off! **James Cranch** had married in the same quarter, and had the same reference. While it isn't always the case

that two names having the same reference were actually husband and wife, in this case I was quite sure I'd found the correct couple.

In further research into this family, I confirmed that **Catherine** and **Harriet Witheridge** had no descendants. **Florence** and **John Rickard** had three children, all born in Cornwall (see family tree on page 35), and many descendants. **Lizzie** and **William Leaman**, who had a thriving drapery business in Lewisham, didn't have any children.

But seeing the name Cranch on those two shops in Salcombe made me think about William and Catherine's eldest daughter, **Sarah Mary Witheridge**, and her husband **James Cranch**. James wasn't at home for the census return of 1891, but Sarah Mary, wife, aged 32, was at 16 Church Street, Malborough, with children **Mary Carlotta** (7), **Catherine Isabel** (4), **Gladys** (1), and **Stella Florence** (3 months). Also in the household was Harriet A Witheridge, 24, sister-in-law to the head of household. All gave their place of birth as Salcombe.

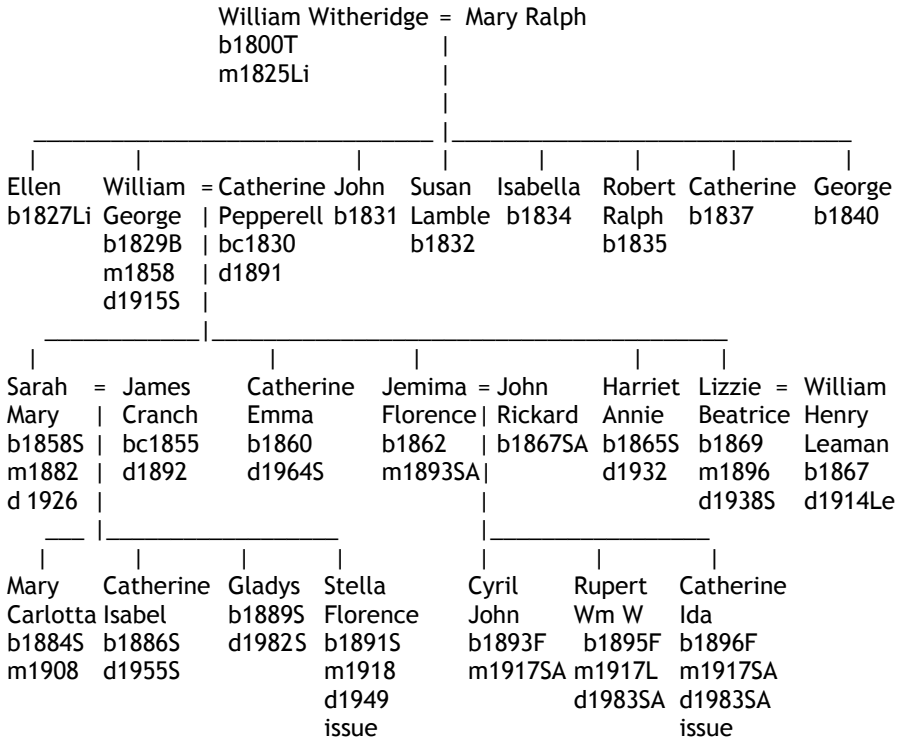
There were at least three men called James Cranch born in this area within a few months of each other. I've not yet found this James in the 1881 or 1891 census, even though I've checked alternatives such as Crouch. Given the strong maritime history of the area, he may have been at sea, but it has also been suggested that he was in the Army. Further research is needed.

James died in the spring of 1892, at the age of 35, leaving Sarah, then living in the tiny village of Malborough, to bring up, on her own, their four daughters, **Mary C(h)arlotta**, **Catherine Isabel**, **Gladys**, and **Stella Florence**.

Clearly an industrious woman with entrepreneurial skills, Sarah moved her family the few miles to Salcombe, and set up a grocery business at 78 Fore Street. In 1901 Sarah was at home there, with daughters Catherine and Stella Cranch, her father, **William George Witheridge** and her sister Harriet Annie. Sarah's other daughters, Carlotta and Gladys Cranch, were in Lewisham with their uncle and aunt, William and Lizzie Leaman. Carlotta was working in their business as a drapery clerk, while Gladys was still a scholar.

Ten years later, in 1911, Sarah, obviously a successful business woman, had two shops, at 78 and 79 Fore Street, with 11 residential rooms to accommodate herself, her widowed father (now a Trinity House pensioner), her sister Harriet and daughter Stella. Mary Carlotta had married in 1908. At some time between 1901 and 1911, Catherine had become interested in the drapery business, and in 1911, aged 24 and single, she was one of three draper's assistants at 18 Wellington

# *Witheridge Family of Bantham and Salcombe*



Key  
 b = born                      c = circa                      d = died or buried                      m = married  
 B = Bantham                      F = Fowey                      L = Lambeth                      Le = Lewisham  
 Li = Liverpool                      S = Salcombe                      SA = St Austell                      T = Thurlestone

*Kingsbridge Estuary, seen over 60 years ago from East Portlemouth, with Salcombe on the far bank.*



Crescent, Ramsgate, Kent. The proprietor of the business, James Wright, didn't live in the property, but did sign the census return. **Gladys Cranch**, still single, was lodging at West Down, near Barnstaple, and working for Devon County Council as a teaching assistant.

After the death of 47-year-old **William Leaman** in Lewisham in 1914, **Lizzie** returned to Salcombe, bringing her drapery business with her. Conveniently, there was already a draper's shop in premises at 77 Fore Street, next to her mother's shop. In 1901 and 1911 this was being run by the Jellard family. At some point Lizzie and her sister **Catherine Witheridge**, took over the business, naming it Leaman & Witheridge. Lizzie Leaman died in 1938 at the age of 69, by which time Catherine, then 78, had probably retired from working in the shop, though she may still have exercised some supervision.

I've not yet discovered who owned and ran the business after World War II. Their niece **Catherine Cranch**, who had returned from working in a Kent drapery, may have been involved. When I visited the Leaman & Witheridge shop in the 1960s the staff clearly remembered Gladys Cranch, so perhaps she also had some involvement in the business. It continued to trade as Leaman & Witheridge until at least 1978.

But what really caught my eye in the 1911 census entry for **Sarah Mary Cranch** (née Witheridge) was the full address and the nature of the business. The two shops were at 78 and 79 Fore Street, and Sarah was now running a confectionery business on her own account!

Surely the two shops, one a grocery and one a sweet shop, on either side of the 2009 auction property at 78, were the businesses once run

*Fore Street a century ago. Could that have been Sarah Mary Cranch (née Witheridge) standing in the doorway of her shop on the right?*



by Sarah Mary Cranch! The two shops were clearly still being run as one business, as they had identical sign-writing and matching staff uniforms.

As we watched the TV auction, we thought how sensible it would be if whoever owned the two Cranch shops could buy this little unit wedged between their two premises.

As the bidding advanced, one woman was clearly determined to buy the property, even when bids went well above the guide price. After her final, successful bid, there were many in the auction room ready to hug and congratulate her.

It turned out that she was one of two sisters, Angela Cater and Suzanne Harris, who had owned both the sweet shop and Cranch's grocery since 1981. So popular are they in the town, that all local bidders had withdrawn, and the only competing bids had come from out-of-town telephone bidders.

Later, the programme showed the sisters, in their matching candy-pink tops, bearing the Cranch logo, stocking up the tiny new addition to their premises, and displaying old-fashioned candy jars, full of traditional sweets, in the extra widow space. The main shop was packed, not only with every conceivable type of traditional sweet, but also with plenty of eager customers.

As we looked at these thriving shops in Salcombe, and saw the respect in which the two sisters were clearly held, I couldn't help thinking that they were worthy entrepreneurial successors to **Sarah Mary Cranch** (née Witheridge). This was borne out when I checked them on the Internet, and saw the lively, friendly pages offering their traditional sweets to buyers in all parts of the world.

Both the shop sign and the website state that the confectionery business was established in 1869. When the business celebrated its 140th birthday in 2009, the local paper claimed that it started when **Gladys Cranch**, 'decided to start selling the delicious toffee and sweets she had been making in her kitchen'! The reporter clearly hadn't got his facts right. Whoever started the business, boiling sweets in copper pans in the back room, it can't have been Gladys Cranch, as she hadn't been born until 12 April 1889!

The current owners agree that the first Cranch to make sweets at that address was Sarah Mary (née Witheridge), who had moved there



*C I and G Cranch is the name above the left-hand shop window. The unit sold at auction has the striped awning. Part of Cranch's grocery shop can be seen far right. The building to the left used to be the Leaman & Witheridge drapers.*

sometime after the death of her husband in 1892. Even though in 1901 she was listed as a grocer, she had probably started making sweets there soon after the move, for by 1911 her enterprise had grown enough to be classed as a confectionery.

A check on the 1871 census appears to show that no-one was making sweets at any of the Fore Street addresses at that time. Sarah Ann Laphorne was running a lodging house at 78 Fore Street, and 79 was occupied by Elizabeth Ann Jarvis, master mariner's wife. However, for some time in the 19th century, the upper part of Fore Street was known as Union Street, and the numbering of the properties was different. It will take further research to establish the correct address for these properties prior to 1891. The current owners believe that the sweet-making was started in a small way in 1869 by someone else, and taken over and expanded by **Sarah Mary Cranch**.

The sign above the shop, which says '**C I & G Cranch**', clearly indicates that **Catherine Isabel** and **Gladys** were the last members of the Cranch family to run the business. They lived with their mother above the shop, so had probably worked in the business for some years before Sarah died in 1926. The two sisters continued to run the businesses together and, after the death of their aunt **Lizzie Beatrice Leaman** in 1938, may well have run the drapery business next door as well. They maintained their success even through the war years of rationing and six bombing raids on Salcombe, one in 1941, two in 1942 and three in 1943. In the March 1943 raid, five people were killed, and properties opposite the Cranch businesses were demolished.

Catherine, who died in 1955, lived long enough to see sweet rationing relaxed in 1953. Gladys then ran the business on her own, until she finally retired in 1970 and sold the business to Mike Yeoman, from another prominent Salcombe family. At one time there was a Cranch-Yeoman marriage, so he may have been distantly related.

Clearly, Sarah Mary and her children all had a strong work ethic, coupled with business skills. Gladys is still remembered by some of the long-term residents of Salcombe as a hard worker, who always wore her hair rolled to one side, following the style of her mother. It is said that she never relinquished the long skirts of her youth, and that, like the rest of the family, she was a staunch Methodist. Gladys enjoyed 12 years of retirement, and died in her nineties, in 1982.

If nostalgia for all those lovely old favourites like liquorice bootlaces and sherbet dabs makes your mouth water, drool no more, as you can order them on-line at <http://www.cranchs-sweetshop.co.uk!>

## *Reunion & AGM 2011*

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

The location for the 2011 Reunion & AGM will be Somerton, Somerset. The Methodist Hall, West Street, Somerton, has been booked from 10.00 am–5.00 pm on Saturday 11 June. Please send any AGM motions or nominations by post or email, to the Hon President, Kim Cook.

This year we're re-introducing the competitions that were so popular in earlier years, and there will be three:

- 1 Most interesting item(s) of family memorabilia;
- 2 Poetry competition, any subject, maximum 64 lines;
- 3 Photo competition, landscape or place of historic interest.

Those not able to attend the Reunion may enter Competitions 2 and 3, sending their entries by email to [witheridge1987@aol.com](mailto:witheridge1987@aol.com) to arrive on or before Tuesday 31 May (UK time). At the Reunion, entries will be displayed anonymously and numbered, and those attending may all vote for entries in each category. When votes have been counted and checked, the winners will be announced and prizes given.

An outing, with shared cars, is planned for Sunday 12 June. Four options are **Barrington Court** (NT), near Ilminster; **Montacute House** (NT), near Martock; **Fleet Air Arm Museum**, RNAS Yeovilton; **Clark's Village**, Street, Somerset. Full details of all four are on the Internet. Please indicate your outing preferences on the booking form overleaf.

### **Provisional Programme**

#### **Saturday**

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 10.00 am–11.00 am   | Registration and refreshments                  |
| 11.00 am–12.00 noon | AGM (full Agenda and voting details to follow) |
| 12.00 noon–1.00 pm  | Competition judging by all present             |
| 1.00 pm–2.00 pm     | Lunch  |
| 2.00 pm–2.45 pm     | Short talk/Brains Trust                        |
| 2.45 pm–3.15 pm     | Competition Results and Prizegiving            |
| 3.15 pm–4.45 pm     | Social time, with refreshments                 |
| 5.00 pm             | Leave hall                                     |
| 7.00 pm             | Evening meal together in local pub/restaurant  |

#### **Sunday**

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 10.00 am | Meet for outing (car sharing) to a venue chosen (from the list above) by those attending. |
|----------|---|

## *Accommodation in Somerton*

Listed below is a selection of places offering accommodation in Somerton

**Cleers View Farm**, Somerton Hill, Somerton, Somerset, TA10 9AD.

Tel: 01458 272175 e-mail: maiseywebb@aol.com

**Long Orchard House** Bed and Breakfast, Carol Lomax

Station Path, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PX.

Tel: 01458 272497 Mob: 07974 581183 e-mail: longorchard@gmail.com

**Ringers Well** Bed and Breakfast, Mrs Sherry Briggs

Station Path, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PX.

Tel: 01458 273476 Mob: 07929 197001 e-mail: sherry.briggs@lineone.net

**Somerton Court Country House**, Owen and Pauline Stephens

Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7AH.

Tel:01458 274694 fax:01458 274694 e-mail: enquiries@somertoncourt.com

**The Lynch Country House**, 4 Behind Berry, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PD.

Tel: 01458 272316 Fax: 01458 272590 e-mail: the\_lynch@talk21.com

**The Globe Inn**, Market Place, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7LX.

Tel: 01458 272474

**The White Hart**, Market Place, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7LX.

tel 01458 272314 www.whitehartsomerton.co.uk

**Buttercross Tearooms**, Market Place, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7NB.

Tel: (01458) 273168 e-mail: abeardshaw@lineone.net

**Unicorn Hotel**, West Street, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PR.

Tel:01458 272101 fax:01458 272181

e-mail: theunicorn@unicorn@somerton.co.uk

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## *Reunion & AGM Booking Form*

**I/we will be attending the 2011 Reunion & AGM in Somerton.**

No of adults: . . . . .

No of children . . . . .

**I/we will/will not be staying for the Sunday programme.**

Preferred options for outing: 1 . . . . .

2 . . . . . 3 . . . . .

**I/we regret we will not be attending the 2011 Reunion & AGM**

Name(s) . . . . .

Address . . . . .

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