

# *WITHERIDGE TIMES*

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## *Letter from the*

## *Editor*



Dear Friends

This year's AGM and Reunion went well, but both were somewhat muted, as a number of stalwarts were unable to attend, and many, including overseas members, are saving their trip for 2012, when we celebrate 25 years of our Society. It is amazing for Roy and me to recall that our sons were then mere teenagers, and now one is our Chairman! Where have the years gone?

The minutes of the AGM are on pages 7-15, and Liz Davey's report on the Reunion follows on pages 16-17, followed by Jason's report on the Reunion Competitions, including copies of the winning entries, on pages 17-23. I must confess to considerable embarrassment, having offered a number of entries in both competitions, and found myself the winner in both!

We hope that the inclusion of the winning entries will encourage many more members to enter our competitions next year. It would be great to have a much wider selection of photos and poems to test the judgement of all those attending our Silver Jubilee Reunion.

In this issue we welcome members Tom and Sheila Jewell and Fran Taylor, all known to us for some time, but officially welcomed in this issue (pages 4-6). Abridged trees, showing their Witheridge connections, are included. It was lovely to meet Fran and her partner Robert for the first time, when we gathered in Hertfordshire with Joyce Browne and Ron and Brenda Dixon (see page 3).

As we in the northern hemisphere move through summer and look forward to a fruitful autumn, our members in Australia and New Zealand are moving through winter into spring. Whatever the season brings, may you all stay healthy and happy.

With love to you all,

*Kim*

Tenterden, 25 August 2011

## Family News

### Congratulations!

Congratulations to **Joyce** and **Allan Marnham**, (picture right, with son **Glen**) who celebrated their Diamond Wedding in July. Joyce, now 84, and her late brother **Eric Pover**, children of **Ethel Pover** (née **Witheridge**), were **Witheridge FHS** members for many years. Although Joyce is happy and otherwise very healthy, she now has a vascular condition which affects her memory, so has not continued her membership.



*Allan Marnham, son Glen, and wife Joyce at Joyce and Allan's diamond wedding party in July.*

Daughter **Jan Buck** with husband **Chris**, son **Glen** and a large crowd of grandchildren and their partners, all combined to lay on a great surprise party at Jan's home, with enough hot and cold food to feed the proverbial five thousand! Among the many guests were cousins **Brenda** and **Ron Dixon**, Brenda's sister **Mary Foster** and her husband **Michael**, and **Roy** and **Kim Cook**.

### Hertfordshire Gathering

As **Joyce Browne** hasn't been well enough to travel to recent **Witheridge FHS AGMs**, an informal gathering was arranged on Saturday 20 August, so that Joyce could meet up with some of our members. Sadly, a number of those who had hoped to be there couldn't make it.



However, Joyce, along with **Brenda** and **Ron Dixon**, **Frances Taylor** and her partner **Robert Fieldhouse**, and **Roy** and **Kim Cook** all enjoyed a delicious meal at the **Red Lion** (left), a community-owned pub on **The Green**, at **Preston Village** in **Hertfordshire**.

### Condolences

We are very sorry to report the death, on 1 July 2011, of **Donald Witheridge**, of **Hemsby, Norfolk**. Our condolences go to his 11 surviving children and their families. An obituary is on page 24.

## *New Members*



It's always a great pleasure to welcome new members, although this time not all are really new.

### **Tom and Sheila Jewell**

First, we welcome as full members **Tom and Sheila Jewell**, of 45 Higher Kings Avenue, Pennsylvania, Exeter, EX4 6JP. In return for their research and support over many years, they have been Honorary Members, with no voting rights. Recent change in membership rules now allow Tom and Sheila to join as full members, and we're delighted that they are

now be able to have a full role in the Society. It was lovely to see them at our AGM and Reunion this year (see picture above).

Sheila's link with the Witheridges comes through her 4 x great-grandparents, **Jerome and Dinah Ford**. Their son **John Ford** had a daughter Louise, born in Ermington, who married Thomas Phillips. Thomas's daughter **Lavinia Phillips**, born in 1843, also in Ermington, who married **Walter Baskerville**, was Sheila's great-grandmother.

John Ford's sister Dinah married **John Walke**, and in 1819, their daughter **Lucy Walke** married **William Sandover**, son of James and Betty Sandover. William's brother **John Sandover** married Mary Tall, and in 1867 in Modbury, their grand-daughter **Maria Tall Sandover**, married **John Northmore Witheridge!** The family tree showing these relationships is shown opposite.

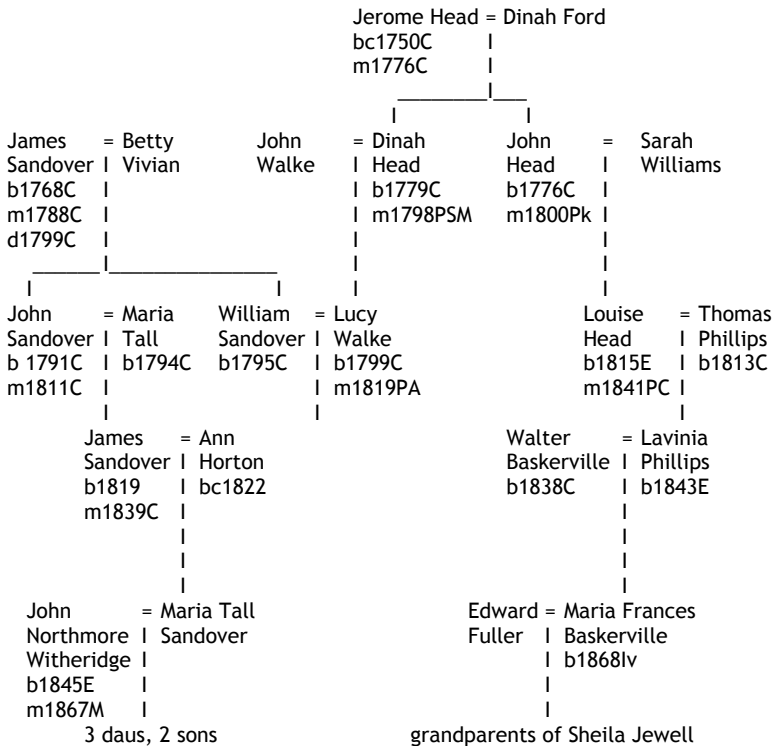
### **Frances Taylor**

Next, we offer a belated welcome to **Frances (Fran) Taylor**, of 6 Hitchwood Cottages, Hitchwood Lane, Preston, near Hitchin, Herts SG4 7RY. Fran, the daughter of **Francis E Witheridge** and **Joan Exell**, joined us in 2009, but somehow hasn't previously received an official welcome in *The Witheridge Times*. Fran, please accept our apologies and be assured that this welcome is all the more warm for being late.

Fran, who is a talented artist and art therapist, is from the family we have come to know as the Witheridge-Causey line. They are all descended from **John Witheridge** of Bideford and his wife **Mary Atkins**, who married in North Tawton in 1798. Fran, the sister of **Rev John Witheridge**, is related to many members and former members of the

## *Family Tree*

*showing Witheridge link to Sheila Jewell*



Key: C = Cornwood      E = Ermington      Iv= Ivybridge      M= Modbury  
 PA = Plymouth St Andrew    PC = Plymouth Charles    Pk = Plymstock    PSM= Plympton St Mary

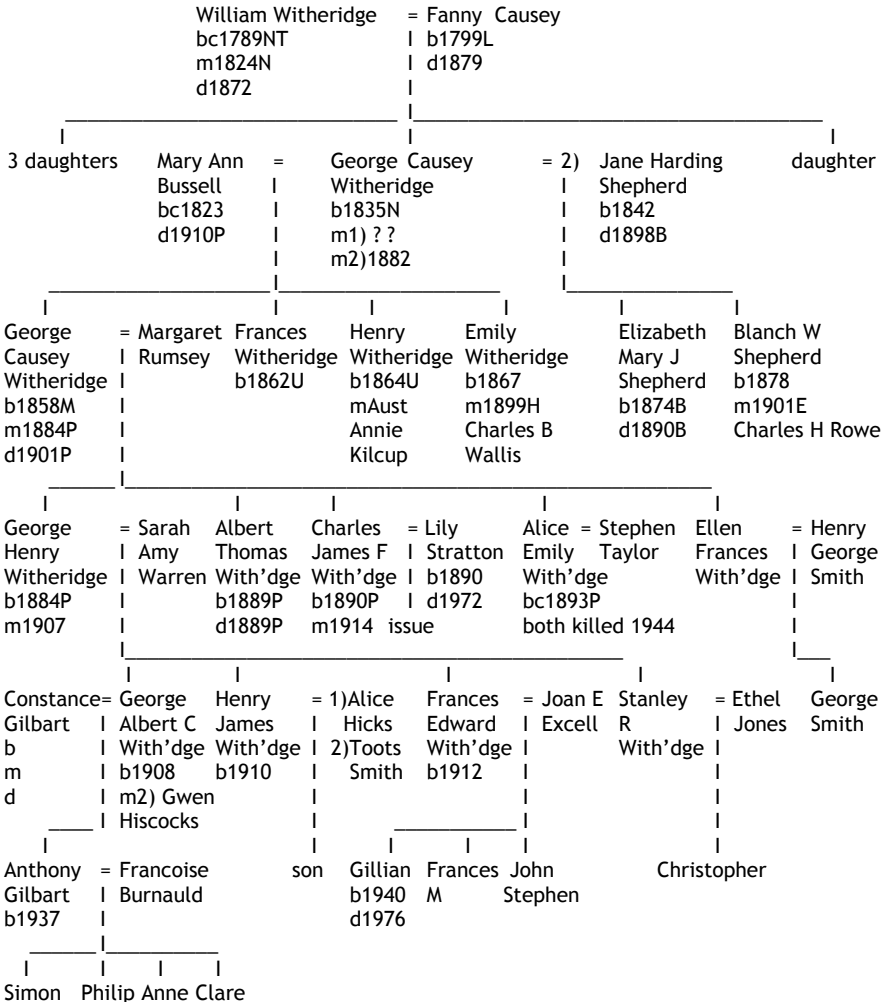
WFHS. She's a first cousin of the late **Col Anthony Witheridge**, and first cousin once removed to his sons **Simon** and **Philip**. All are also related to the late **George Smith**, who was a member of the Witheridge FHS in the early days, and to **Christopher Witheridge**, also a member for some years.

All are descended from **William Witheridge**, son of John Witheridge and Mary Atkins, who married **Fanny Elizabeth Causey** in 1824 in Northam – hence the name by which this family has become known.

William and Fanny had five daughters and one son, **George Causey Witheridge**, born in 1835 in Northam. For many years George lived

with **Mary Ann Bussell**, described as his wife, although we have not yet found their marriage. Their son, also **George Causey Witheridge**, was born in Marylebone in 1858, but then the family emigrated to the USA, where they lived for about five years, and had two more children. By 1867, when their fourth child was born, George and Mary Ann were back in London. An abridged family tree is shown below.

*Witheridge-Causey Descendants (abridged)*



B = Bideford H = Holborn L = Littleham N = Northam NT= North Tawton P = Pancras U = USA  
6

# *Witheridge Family History Society*

## *Annual General Meeting 2011*

The 2011 AGM of the Witheridge FHS, held at the Methodist Hall, West Street, Somerton, on Saturday 12 June, opened at 11.20 am. This was somewhat later than intended, partly because some members had difficulty finding the venue, and partly because it was some distance from the nearest car park, and all refreshments and displays had to be ferried in relays to the hall.

Present: **Jason Cook** (Chairman) & **Zoe Cook**, **Kim & Roy Cook**, **Liz Davey**, **Derek & Pamela Glynn**, **Sheila & Tom Jewell**, **Maureen & Richard Witheridge**

### **1 Chairman's opening address and welcome**

**Jason Cook** thanked everyone for coming, and looked forward to a productive meeting. He expressed relief that the Society had successfully come through a tricky period, and could now look forward to a period of new ideas and new growth. Particularly bearing in mind the Society's 25th Anniversary in 2012, he hoped we would see considerable growth both in membership, and in attendance at next year's Reunion. Meanwhile, he hoped that we could deal speedily and efficiently with all the business in hand, and move on to enjoy some good sociable time together afterwards.

### **2 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence, accompanied by good wishes, were received from: **Joyce Browne**, **Brenda & Ron Dixon**, **Barbara & Terry Finemore**, **Catherine & Geoff Shingler**, **Philip Milnes-Smith**, **Alan & Alison Smith**, **Val Wells**, **Jim Witheridge & David Torborg**, and **Simon & Camilla Witheridge**.

### **3 Minutes of the 2010 AGM, held at Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent**

These had been published on pages 11-20 of the Summer-Autumn 2010 issue of *Witheridge Times*, and it was agreed that they should

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#### **Notes:**

- *Proposers and seconders, as listed in the Agenda (printed in the Spring 2011 issue of Witheridge Times), have not been repeated here, to save space.*
- *Where absentee members registered a vote, voting figures show attending voters + absentee voters. Some absentee voters registered votes only on selected items.*

be taken as read. The minutes were accepted unanimously (11 for, 0 against).

#### 4 **Matters arising from these minutes**

**Kim Cook** pointed out that, as we had no Secretary, the master copy of the Constitution had not been updated in accordance with amendments introduced last year. She had done some work on this herself, but had been unable to complete it before the meeting. It was agreed that the update, to include any additional amendments which might arise from this year's AGM, would be completed as soon as possible and forwarded to **Richard Witheridge**, so that it could be sent to all new members, and to any existing members wishing to have a copy.

#### 5 **Matters arising from Officers' Reports**

These reports, included on pages 10-15 of the Spring 2011 issue of *Witheridge Times*, were taken as read, and were accepted unanimously (11 for, 0 against).

#### 6 **Election of Officers and Committee Members**

The following had been proposed and seconded for the posts listed, and had agreed to stand. There being no other nominations, a vote was taken, and all were elected unanimously (11+6 for, 0 against).

Chairman	<b>Jason Cook</b>
Vice Chairman	<b>Richard Witheridge</b>
Membership Secretary	<b>Richard Witheridge</b>
Treasurer	<b>Richard Witheridge</b>
Assistant Treasurer	<b>Maureen Witheridge</b>
Editor and Publisher	<b>Kim Cook</b>
Research Co-ordinator	<b>Kim Cook</b>
Webmaster	<b>Bill Dwyne</b>
Committee Members	<b>Pamela Glynn</b> <b>Roy Cook</b> <b>Liz Davey</b>

Jason Cook, having been re-elected as Chairman, continued chairing the meeting, noting with considerable regret and misgiving that no nomination had been received for the post of Secretary. He asked if anyone present would be able to take on the task, but no-one was able to. He expressed a wish that we would soon find someone, either from within the Witheridge FHS, or via the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS), who would be willing to undertake this essential, but not arduous, task, as covering the work distracts other Committee Members from their own essential duties.



## 7 Overseas Representatives

The following had agreed to continue as the Society's Overseas Representatives, and the Society is delighted to accept their offer. (*Note: This is not an item on which a vote is required*)

Australia: **Judith and Allan Witheridge**;

New Zealand: **Velma Metcalfe**

Members expressed their thanks to these Representatives for their continued support. **Richard Witheridge** had asked **Annette Witheridge** of New York, if she would be our USA representative. Although Annette declined, she had very kindly offered to act as a channel for receipt of subscriptions (plus exchange fees) in US dollars, and the transfer of these funds to the Membership Secretary in sterling. Richard had also asked **Bill Dwyne** if he would consider being our representative in Canada, but at present Bill is greatly occupied with reconstructing the WFHS web-site, and had not yet made a decision. If necessary, the Committee will continue to explore other possibilities for representation in Canada.

## 8 Appointment of Auditor

Following recent bypass surgery, **Ron Dixon** is no longer able to act as the Society's Auditor. **Kim Cook** explained that although **Derek Nixon** had acted as our Auditor this year, he is facing surgery later in the year, and was therefore unwilling to commit to acting for us in further years until the outcome of the surgery becomes clear. **Pamela Glynn** said she would ask her son **Andrew Glynn** if he would consider taking on this task. It was agreed unanimously that the appointment of an Auditor would be left to the decision of the Committee. (11+4 for, 0 against)

## 9 Vote of thanks to those who have served the WFHS in the past year

A special vote of thanks to **Paul Witheridge** (Canada) for so kindly keeping the web-site going for the past year; to **Ron Dixon**, who has faithfully audited our accounts for many years; and to **Derek Nixon** for kindly acting as our Auditor at short notice this year, was proposed and passed unanimously (11+6 for, 0 against). Thank-you cards for all three were signed by all present. A gift for **Ron Dixon** was approved, as was a small gift to **Derek Nixon**.

## 10 Proposal to amend Paragraph 2 of the Society's Constitution to include the following extra sentence: *If at any time the Society is without a Secretary, the recognised address shall be that of the Honorary Life President, until such time as a Secretary is appointed.*

It was agreed that, as the post of Honorary Life President is not subject to change at annual elections, this would be the most sensible alternative address for the Society at any time it is without a Secretary. The proposal was passed unanimously (11+6 for, 0 against).

**11 Proposal to continue the Society's membership of the Federation of Family History Societies and the Guild of One-Name Studies**

It was agreed unanimously (11+6 for, 0 against) that the Society should continue in Membership of the Federation of Family History Societies, and the Guild of One-Name Studies. Kim explained that Guild membership has to be in the name of a single individual, and could not be held by the Society as a whole, or by an individual by virtue of holding a post within the Society. Membership is now held in the name of **Kim Cook**, our Research Co-ordinator, and she has agreed to relinquish the Guild registration should she at any time cease to be the Society's Research Co-ordinator, so that her successor in this post will be free to take up the holding. Kim also explained that the Guild offers each name-holder a number of pages on the Guild web-site. These enable enquirers to see whether the holder is an individual, or represents a group or Society, and can include a full listing of material held, so that enquirers can see how much the WFHS has to offer members. This facility had not been used in the past, but she hoped we would now be able to make full use of it to promote the Society.

**12 Proposal to promote WFHS on the Federation of Family History Societies' stall at the 2012 *Who Do You Think You Are (WDYTYA)* exhibition**

**Kim Cook** explained that this year, as an experiment, the FFHS had agreed to have limited copies of leaflets promoting member societies, on the FFHS stand at the *WDYTYA* exhibition. As it had worked well, FFHS was offering to continue this service to members, and might also look at other ways in which they could help smaller societies promote themselves at the exhibition. The leaflet option would be at no charge, but there might be a charge for other possible promotional activity. The proposal to promote WFHS at *WDYTYA* was agreed unanimously (11+6 for, 0 against). Those present then agreed that up to £25.00 could be spent on promotion without further reference, but that any expenditure over that amount would have to be approved by the Committee (voting 11 for, 0 against). It was agreed that the Society should produce promotional leaflets

(probably A4 folded in three) which could be sent out to potential members and/or those interested in coming to the 25th Anniversary celebrations next year.

### 13 **Proposal to have a Witheridge FHS page on Facebook**

It was noted that no costs would be involved in setting up and running a Facebook page for any group, but that it would need monitoring. **Jim Witheridge** had indicated that he would be willing to look into setting it up.

A number of members, both present and absent, indicated concerns about Facebook, following bad publicity, but absentee voters were willing to accept the motion, subject to the provision that appropriate safeguards be put in place. Among attending and absentee voters, there was recognition that Facebook would be a good way of attracting new members from the younger generations. **Jason Cook** produced a list of over 90 Witheridges listed on Facebook. It was clear that most of those listed were probably under 45. Very few are members, and many are at present unknown to us. Even if the very young ones aren't interested in family history, it's likely that some of their parents may be.

He also pointed out that the bad publicity for Facebook arose from event postings, mainly listed by teenagers, which had been posted without adequate security settings in place. With correct security measures in place, there should be no problems. Jason further explained that those who did not wish to post information on the page would not have to do so, and if they did choose to participate, they could be selective about what information they chose to include. Whoever managed the page would be the point of contact for any non-member wishing to contact a member.

**Zoe Cook** pointed out that she had initially been wary of Facebook, but that since Jason had set up his own page (with no personal details of Zoe or the children), she had been reassured, and was now in contact with some of her old friends, through Jason's Facebook page.

Despite this, some members were still unhappy at the thought of WFHS having a Facebook page. **Kim Cook** reiterated the point that no-one's details would be shown on the page unless the member personally put them on the page. She added that the monitor would be the point of contact, would filter out unwanted contact, and then forward details of the contact to the member, and not those of the member to the contact. The meeting was reminded that the

proposal was only for Jim to look into the setting up of a WFHS page, not for him to go ahead and set up a page.

After further discussion, it was agreed (10+5 for, 1 against) that WFHS should ask **Jim Witheridge** to look into setting up a page, and then report back to the Committee before taking any action. It was also agreed (10 for, 1 against) that, should Jim's report and proposals be accepted by the Committee, the Committee would set up protocols for operating the WFHS Facebook page, to ensure that no personal information about any member should accidentally be posted on the page.

#### **14 Proposal to hold an informal reunion in the Hertfordshire-Bedfordshire area in July or August**

As **Joyce Browne** has not been well enough to attend recent meetings, the Committee thought it would be good to hold an informal meeting closer to her home, so that she has a chance to catch up with old friends and meet new members. Members agreed unanimously (11+6 for, 0 against) to this, some pointing out that it would be helpful not just for Joyce, but for others unable to attend the Annual Reunion. It was agreed that **Kim Cook** should ask Joyce to nominate three convenient dates, and then contact any members who live within reasonable distance to check which date would suit most people.

#### **15 Christmas Card Charity for 2011 to be the British Heart Foundation**

**Liz Davey** stated that her husband Chris had benefited enormously from heart surgery. **Brenda & Ron Dixon** supported the motion, as Ron had also benefited from a number of cardiac procedures, and others present confirmed that family members had good cause to be grateful for procedures that would not have been possible without research. It was agreed unanimously (11+5 for, 0 against) that the BHF would be our Christmas Card Charity for 2011. **Liz Davey** agreed to purchase the cards on the Society's behalf, based on numbers supplied by **Richard Witheridge**, and then forward the cards to Richard for mailing.

#### **16 Date and venue for 2012 Reunion**

No proposals or suggestions had been received by the time the Agenda was distributed. **Jason Cook** opened the discussion by suggesting that, to celebrate the Society's 25th Anniversary, the venue be either in, or as close as possible, to the town of Witheridge. **Kim Cook** added that, since the Agenda has been circulated, **Jim**

**Witheridge** had come up with exactly the same suggestion. As accommodation in Witheridge would not be adequate for large numbers, after some discussion it was agreed (11 for, 0 against) that the venue should again be Tiverton, with the possibility of a coach trip to Witheridge on the Sunday. **Pamela Glynn** agreed to explore the costs of the Tiverton Hotel, and whether any deals were possible, either in reduction of room rate, or provision of a free meeting room. Should accommodation and/or a meeting room in the Tiverton Hotel prove too expensive, Pamela would explore other possible accommodation and meeting venues nearby.

**Tom & Sheila Jewell** agreed to look at facilities in Witheridge, what businesses might be open on the Sunday, and whether the Town Crier would be available as in 1997. Knightshayes and Killerton, two National Trust properties in the area, were also mentioned as possible outing destinations should Witheridge not be suitable.

In a discussion on dates, **Kim Cook** reported that she had received no comment from overseas members as to whether any dates might prove less expensive for air travel. During discussion, it was felt that choosing a UK Bank Holiday would give people more time to spend together on this important anniversary, and allow an extra day for those with long journeys home. Kim pointed out that the 2012 Spring Bank Holiday, normally the last Monday in May, had been put back a week, with an extra day added, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Queen's coronation. The Bank Holiday weekend would therefore be from Sat 2 June to Tues 5 June 2012, inclusive. This, combined with the Olympics (starting in July), would lead to increased tourist numbers, particularly should overseas tourists wish to stay for both events. It was therefore felt that June should be avoided if possible.

It was noted that in the early years, the AGM and Reunion had taken place at the beginning of May, to include the May Day Bank Holiday (first Monday in May). In 2012 this would be the weekend Saturday 5 May to Monday 7 May inclusive. It was therefore agreed (11 for, 0 against) that all enquiries made should focus on this Bank Holiday weekend, and that should this weekend be unavailable for any reason, the Committee would consider alternatives, the first being the weekend of Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 May. Those undertaking to explore the options agreed to report back within a month, and if possible by the end of June, so that all information could be put in the issue of *Witheridge Times* due to be published at the end of July. It would also enable the preparation and mailing of external publicity at an early stage.

## 17 Any other business

### a) Devon FHS AGM & Conference

**Sheila Jewell** mentioned that the Devon FHS would be holding its AGM & Conference on Saturday 8 October in the Belmont Chapel, Western Way, Exeter. There would be many stalls, and this would be a good way of promoting the Witheridge FHS, particularly in an area with such strong Witheridge links, and where many Witheridge descendants may still live. It was agreed that the Committee would look into ways of promoting WFHS at this event, and enquire what it would cost to have a stall there.

### b) Subscriptions

**Richard Witheridge** expressed his concern that there were still some members who had neither replied to his subscription reminders, nor indicated that they no longer wished to be members. After some discussion, it was agreed that Richard would supply **Kim Cook** with a list of UK members who had not renewed, and she would endeavour to make personal contact with those known to her, to give them a final chance to renew. If there was still no response, they would be sent a letter telling them their membership was being discontinued as of a specified date, and then would be removed from the mailing list for the Summer issue of *Witheridge Times*. Overseas members who had not renewed would be removed from the list for automatic mailing by the printer. Their copies of the summer issue of *Witheridge Times* would be sent to **Richard Witheridge**, who would then insert a letter telling them their membership was being discontinued as of a specified date. Any who subsequently responded would then be added back to the automatic mailing list.

### c) Web-site

**Richard Witheridge** reported that **Bill Dwyne** had already done a considerable amount of work on this. At present costs are minimal (about US \$10 a year), as it is being hosted through his son's personal web-site. However, if we were to host our own site, the costs would be much greater, possibly in excess of US \$125.00 a year. This would not be sustainable at present membership levels. Bill also needs more material to go on the site. **Kim Cook** and Richard would liaise on this. All present expressed their thanks to Bill for his willingness to take on the post of Webmaster, and for his hard work in getting the site up and running in its new, simpler format.

- d) **Tom Jewell** mentioned that he is researching the history of manned UK telephone exchanges from about the 1930s, and would like to hear of any anecdotes our members might have relating to unusual calls, wrong connections, humorous or sad. **Kim Cook** agreed that she would mention this project in *Witheridge Times*, and hoped it would produce some good material for Tom.
- e) **Kim Cook** drew the attention of all present to details of the FFHS competition details issued to each person with the Agenda. Details would also be included in the next issue of *Witheridge Times*. She pointed out that any FFHS competition entry which merited a mention in the results, would also bring publicity for WFHS.
- f) **Sheila Jewell** expressed her appreciation of the return of the printed issues of *Witheridge Times*, and proposed a vote of thanks to **Kim Cook** for her hard work in producing such a good magazine, asking that this be minuted. The vote of thanks was taken, the result being 10 for, 0 against, with one obvious abstention! Kim expressed her thanks to everyone for their appreciation and for the confidence boost it gave her.

There being no further items for discussion, the Chairman thanked all present for their input, and closed the meeting at 12.55 pm.

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*We did remember the group photo this year, although with no tripod, it was impossible to get everyone into one photo. But there's no doubt about where we were! Gathered under a Somerton banner were (left to right): Ethan Cook, Richard and Maureen Witheridge, Zoe, Roy, Jason and Lauren Cook, Derek and Pamela Glynn, and Liz Davey.*

## *Witheridge FHS Reunion 2011*

*by Liz Davey*



Though it was quite a way from my Hertfordshire home, I decided to attend the 2011 Reunion, as I could combine this with visiting some of my Somerset family.

By chance, on arriving in Somerton, my husband Chris and I met Kim and Roy in the car park in the centre of Somerton and together, after a number of enquiries, we eventually tracked down the Methodist Hall. We then helped Roy and Jason ferry refreshments, displays, research files, and AGM paperwork, from Roy's car to the hall some distance away. Chris then took himself off to the nearby Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton for the day.

It was a small gathering again this year but I met some members of the Society who were not able to attend last year's reunion in Kent – Derek and Pamela Glynn, Richard and Maureen Witheridge and Sheila and Tom Jewell. We all had a chance to chat, particularly while assessing the photos and poems entered in the competitions, as we tried to decide our favourites.

The formal part of the AGM was completed fairly quickly and we then judged the photographs and poems submitted by members, putting our top three in order of preference, leaving our Chairman, Jason Cook, to sort out the voting slips and do the necessary sums.

We then made our way into the centre of Somerton in search of some lunch. I went to the Unicorn for a pub lunch with some of the group, while others went to a nearby delicatessen café.

Returning from an excellent lunch we regrouped, and Jason announced the results of the competitions. The poem that won was my favourite, but I picked a

*Right: Somerton Methodist Church, set behind a pretty cottage garden. The Church Hall is at the rear, approached by a footpath along the left hand side.*





different photograph from the one that was most popular.

This was followed by a brief question-and-answer session, centred on Internet research, and the choice of which subscription site provides the best information. As all the major sites have considerable overlaps in the basic civil records they provide, there is no universal best. Where sites differ is on other items, like parish records, wills, military, marine and immigration information, and overseas records. The advice was to list the kind of records we need to consult, and check it against what the sites contain. If any site is offering a free trial period, it's a good idea take up the offer when you



*Lauren Cook, helped by dad Jason, cuts the Witheridge birthday cake.*

have enough time to use it for long periods, to achieve a large chunk of your research. And if anyone needs just a small amount of information from a particular site, it's more cost-effective to buy short-term units rather than a full subscription. All useful guidance!

This brief session was followed by refreshments. The Witheridge birthday cake was cut by the youngest person there, 7-year-old Lauren Cook, assisted by her dad, Jason. As we shared the cake, we enjoyed more social time, and I also took the opportunity to look through some of the Enhanced Narrative Pedigrees brought by Kim to see if I was missing any information!

After packing up the research materials and displays, we left the Hall at about 5.00 pm and met up with Chris, who had had an extremely interesting day at the Yeovilton museum. We then said our goodbyes to those members not attending the evening meal and went to find our hotel for the night, the lovely Lynch Country House.

In the evening Chris and I joined Kim and Roy, plus Jason, Zoe and the children, in The Unicorn for a very pleasant meal, during which Chris and Roy discovered a shared interest in motorbikes!

I'm now looking forward to next year's 25th Anniversary Reunion in Tiverton, and meeting everyone again, when I hope to have the chance to meet even more Witheridge FHS members.

## *Reunion Competitions*

*by Jason Cook*



This year we revived the competitions that were very much a feature of earlier reunions, but which had been allowed to slip in recent years. In the past we've have competitions about hats, stories associated with memorabilia, as well as for poems, arts and crafts, and various other subjects.

While we could have done with a few more entries this year, particularly in the poetry competition, the entries attracted a great deal of comment and provoked much discussion, and we are very grateful to those who took the time and trouble to enter one or both of the competitions. It was good to see members gathered around the table where photos and poems (with no indication of who had submitted them), were displayed. Entries in each competition were numbered, and everyone present had a chance to vote, naming their first, second and third choices. It was my task to add up the votes and declare the winners.

For both competitions, I allocated 3 marks for each first choice, 2 for each second choice, and 1 for each third. There were no entries in the junior section of either competition.

In the photo competition, there was a wide range of subjects. It was clear that members preferred the soft, atmospheric photos, rather



*Right: Photos on display for members to judge. They ranged from sunsets and seascapes to old buildings and ancient monuments*

than the crisp, clear ones. Indeed, one of the sharpest gained no votes at all, and another excellent one received only one point! One of my favourites was Maureen Witheridge's photo, taken from her back garden, showing geese gleaning the field behind her home. I felt that it might not have been fully appreciated, being somewhat smaller than some of the other entries, and might have won more votes had it been larger.

When all the votes were added up, the results were clear, with photo 6 (*The Mewstone, Wembury*) receiving a total of 18 points. Photo 1 (*Snowy Sunset in Kent*) came second, with 13 points, and photo 7 (*Stonehenge*) was third, with 10 points.

In the poetry competition, the result was initially a dead heat between *Midnight Meridian* and *Snow*, both on 15 points, with *On the Four Winds* close behind with 14 points. When I announced a dead heat, without naming the poems involved, it was suggested that the deadlock might be resolved by allocating points giving more weight to first place. This made absolutely no difference, for each of the two top poems had received exactly the same number of first, second and third place nominations! One member had abstained from the poetry vote, and one, Zoe Cook, hadn't voted in either competition. It was agreed that Zoe should be asked to vote, without being aware of which poems were in contention for the top places. Her vote clinched the top spot for *Midnight Meridian*.

When the names of the prize-winners were discovered, there was considerable embarrassment for our President, Kim Cook, who proved to be the photographer responsible for photos 6 (1st place) and 1 (2nd place)! Roy added to the family tally by being the photographer who had captured Stonehenge in photo 7.

Kim's embarrassment grew when the results of the poetry competition were announced. It emerged that she was the author of *Midnight Meridian* (1st place) and *On the Four Winds* (3rd place)! Brenda Dixon was the author of 2nd-placed entry *Snow*. It was a clean sweep for the Wembury branch!

As Kim explained at the time: 'Having suggested the competitions in the first place, I thought I ought to set an example by entering some of my own work. I thought this would give our voters more of a choice, never dreaming that things would work out the way they did!' Kim herself had voted for two of the photos by Maureen Witheridge, taken from the lovely back garden she and Richard enjoy in Dunster, and Kim also proved to be the abstaining voter in the poetry competition.

The full results are therefore as follows:

**Photo competition**

- 1 *The Mewstone, Wembury*, by Kim Cook
- 2 *Snowy Sunset in Kent*, by Kim Cook
- 3 *Stonehenge*, by Roy Cook

**Poetry competition**

- 1 *Midnight Meridian*, by Kim Cook
- 2 *Snow*, by Brenda Dixon
- 3 *On the Four Winds*, by Kim Cook

Pocket photo albums were awarded to each of the three photo competition winners, and bound journal-style books were awarded for first and second poems. A certificate, signed by yours truly, was given for all six prize-winning entries.

As promised when the competition was announced, winning photos and poems will be published in *The Witheridge Times*. Sadly, the photos will lose much of their appeal when reproduced in black and white, but we hope to put them on the web-site as well, so that they can be seen in full colour.

*Below: Winning photo, The Mewstone, Wembury, by Kim Cook, was taken at sunset a few years ago, using a Yashica 35mm SLR camera. Kim's Wembury ancestors, many of them mariners, would have been familiar with this view.*





*Above: Snowy Sunset in Kent, by Kim Cook, was taken in 2008, again using a Yashica 35mm SLR camera. In colour, the trees seem to be almost on fire. Below: Stonehenge, by Roy Cook, was taken in 2010, using a 35mm Canon AF.7 Sure Shot. In colour, it emphasises the brooding quality of the stones.*



## Winning Poems

As is often the case with poetry, there's a story behind each of these poems. The winner, *Midnight Meridian*, was inspired by the turn of the millennium. At midnight, on a mild, still night, Roy and Kim stepped out briefly into their garden, and gazed at the stars in the clear dark sky. Thinking of how this special moment was being celebrated at different times around the world inspired this poem.

As Brenda hadn't had time to write anything specifically for this competition, she dug out a copy of *Snow*, written many years earlier – in fact while she was still at school! Those were the days when workmen really did trudge to work on foot, and a child's glimpse of the beauty of fresh morning snow was marred by the sight of footprints.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### *Midnight Meridian*

Midnight  
meridian,  
invisible  
defining  
line,  
separating  
yesterday  
from  
tomorrow  
with a  
slim  
sliver  
of  
now

*Kim Cook*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

### *Snow*

When snow has fallen early and the dawn creeps into sight,  
And workmen leave their sleeping homes and trudge upon their way,  
They leave a trace of heavy footsteps on the bed of white,  
And spoil the untouched beauty of a newly-dawning day.

*Brenda Dixon*

*On the Four Winds* was inspired by Kim’s work in local and family history, and reflects the input of many nations into our language and culture. The poem tracks the hours through the compass points, matching the time of day with the landscape and its peoples.



### *On the Four Winds*

Through the winter nights, when the sharp air bites  
In the dark and secret sky,  
The north wind wails through the crags and vales,  
Howling sagas of days gone by,  
Of Viking invaders, of reivers and raiders,  
Deep tarns, and the fells climbing high.

In the cool spring dawn, as the emerging corn  
Braves the fickle warmth of the day,  
Across wide open plains, over ditches and drains,  
The cutting east wind sings its lay  
Of the dark and the flaxen, the Angle and Saxon,  
The weaver, the fisherman’s bay.

As the sun beats high in the clear blue sky  
Over downland and chalky-streaked hills,  
The soft southern breeze rustles grasses and trees,  
And whispers to meadows and rills  
Of Norman and Roman, of pikeman and bowman,  
The farmer, the corn-grinding mills.

In the softening glow as the sun sinks low  
And the leaves turn tawny and gold,  
From the sea to the shore, over levels and moor,  
The west wind breathes stories of old,  
Of Celts and tanned sailors, of miners and jailers,  
Of orchards, and sheep in the fold.

The four winds had brought them, we welcomed, we fought them,  
The noble and lowly in station.  
We learned and we taught, we sold and we bought,  
Mingled customs and skills and creation,  
And we won in the end as each foe became friend,  
And we all became proud of our nation.

# *Donald Witheridge*

1926-2011

**Donald Witheridge**, born in 1926 in Oxfordshire, was the fourth and youngest child of **Arthur Witheridge** and **Florence Rose Filer Rugg**. In 1947, in Ashton, Lancashire, Don married **Eileen Marston**. For a while they stayed in the Ashton area, where two sons and two daughters were born, but in the late 1950s they bought a large plot of land at Hemsby, on the Norfolk coast, and set up a holiday caravan park.

Over the years both the family and the business expanded. Between 1959 and 1970 a further four sons and three daughters were born, and the family has always been a very close and supportive one. Sadly, one daughter **Tina**, born in 1963, died in hospital in 1982, aged just 18.

Don and Eileen, who lived on the Hemsby site, worked hard to expand their **Blue Riband Holidays** business from the original few caravans there, to a range of quality holiday caravans, chalets, and bungalows at many sites across a number of Norfolk locations, including Hemsby Parklands, Caister, California, Scratby, and Winterton.

Don loved miniature railways, and installed one on the Parklands site (see below), which has given pleasure to thousands. A staunch member of both the Heywood Society and the 7¼ Gauge Society, in 1984 he won the Charles Simpson award for his outstanding contribution to the latter. He and Eileen were keen dog-lovers too, and were never without at least one in tow, even in the office. Naturally, their holiday sites promise 'pets are always welcome'.

In the late 1990s, Eileen became ill with cancer, and she died in May 2000, shortly before her 71st birthday. Don died on 1 July 2011, aged 84, after a valiant fight against illness, and was buried at the Parklands Estate, Hemsby.

Blue Riband Holidays has been a prime holiday company in Norfolk for over 50 years, and Don and Eileen's family have long been involved in running the family business. In recent years their daughter-in-law Stephanie, wife of their son Donald, has been at the helm.

Our condolences go to Don's surviving children, Peter, Jean, Kim, Tony, Donald, Mark, Craig, Donna, Caroline and Andrew, his daughters-in-law, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.





# *News for Researchers*

## **Marine records on Find My Past**

Many of our Witheridge families, past and present, have had strong links with both the Royal Navy and the merchant marine. In conjunction with The National Archives, the findmypast web-site has added a million 20th-century records of merchant seaman. They have also added thousands of new records to their 1881 and 1891 collection of crew list records.

## **London Metropolitan Archives**

For over two years, the London Metropolitan Archives (MLA) and Ancestry have been in partnership to digitise parish registers and Poor Law documents, so that original images can be available on-line. These documents have been of immense use in our Witheridge research as, over the centuries, many Witheridge/Wetheridge families have spent at least some time living in the London area.

The digitisation project is now moving on to cover wills and electoral registers, which are due to be posted on-line by Ancestry very soon. In addition, the LMA has received parish records for six parishes which had not previously deposited records with LMA, as well as additional documents from ten parishes which had previously deposited a limited number of documents.

## **Alternative Source for UK Civil Registration documents**

Members may not be aware that there are two sets of records for UK civil registrations of births, marriages and deaths. Those sent to the GRO are copies of the originals held by local Register Offices. Inevitably, copying records sometimes introduces errors, and so indexes based on GRO holdings, while excellently transcribed, will include any errors introduced in the original copying process.

Original entries held by local Register Offices have avoided these errors, and in many cases have more complete information than the copies sent to the GRO. In many marriages the entries are fully paired and include the wedding venue, and in some cases the birth indexes contain the mother's maiden name for all years, while many death indexes have age at death for all years.

The website [www.UKBMD.org.uk](http://www.UKBMD.org.uk) has links to over 2,000 websites offering GRO transcriptions, including many with local entries for specific counties.



## *A Traditional English Wedding?*

*Part 2*

*by Kim Cook*

*Today's weddings aren't as traditional as we think they are, and the history of English weddings is fascinating. Part 1 of this article looked at the choice of day, banns and licences, choice of spouse, wedding garments, and flowers and favours. Part 2 covers transport, the ceremony, the guests, food and drink and, last but not least, the honeymoon!*

### **Getting to the church**

Traditionally, the whole process of getting to the church was generally far more relaxed and informal than nowadays, and usually involved a merry procession. Only the most affluent would have had formal processions, with carriages and sometimes with paid musicians.

Most brides married close to home and would walk to church, accompanied by those family members free to attend, with perhaps a few friends as well. Sometimes the groom and his party would join the procession or, if approaching from another direction, would join the bride's procession as they approached the church door. People who lived or worked along the route would step out to cheer the procession on its way, and any who had musical instruments, whether fiddle, tambour or penny whistle, would add a tune.

If walking was impracticable, the bride might use wheeled transport. While the wealthy had their own carriages, poorer families used whatever was available, ranging from a pretty little dog-cart to the local farmyard cart, scrubbed up for the occasion and decorated



*This 1883 painting by Sir S L Fildes shows a village bridal procession. The clothing indicates that members of the wedding party weren't poor, but they still followed the tradition of walking through the village, so that those who lived or worked along the route could see the procession.*

*Right: In this 1893 picture, a newly-engaged young country girl admires her ring. Is she trying out the hay-cart for size, intending to use it on her wedding day?*



with greenery and flowers in season. The cart would carry all the bridal party, sometimes stopping along the way to pick up

other family members. Again, those members of the local community who were free, would walk behind the cart, and any available musicians would play well-known tunes that people could sing along to.

### **The ceremony**

For many centuries the procession would have gone no further than the church door, as this was where the ceremony was conducted. Chaucer, in his *Canterbury Tales* (dating from 1387), has the Wife of Bath declaring that she has had five husbands at the church door – a clear reference to this being the accepted place for the ceremony. This was partly because the ceremony included the handing over of the dowry and the ratification of contracts. It was clearly inappropriate for this to happen in church, so the church door was considered the best place. Gradually, as the custom grew for these business arrangements to be handled in advance of the wedding ceremony, services were allowed to take place inside the church, and by late Tudor times many ceremonies were conducted at the altar.

Until the late 17th or early 18th century, any guests had to stand throughout the ceremony, as indeed did church-goers at all services. Pews, revered by so many as essential church furniture, were not generally introduced until this time, although there were exceptions in the cases of royal and private chapels. For reasons of structural integrity, many old parish churches were built with thicker walls at the base, with a sloping ledge about 3 feet above the floor, where the wall became thinner. With no seating in the church, these ledges were the only places that afforded rest for the frail and weary, who would sit with their backs to the wall (hence the common phrase for people in difficulty). From 1662 the ceremony itself would have followed the form still used in the *Prayer Book* (amended in 1928), but there would have been little or no music.

The pipe organ as we know it, was another comparatively late introduction, mainly because it was rare, expensive and required a



*Left: This gathering in Dorset celebrated the Victorian West Gallery music tradition, as described in the works of Thomas Hardy. Any villager who had even the simplest musical instrument, would sit in the gallery and join in!*

highly-paid musician, which few parishes could afford. Until Victorian times, any music would probably have come from the gallery, usually at the west end of the church, where local musicians played a variety of instruments including lutes, psalteries and fiddles, early pipes, recorders and clarinets, tambours and, by the early 18th century, the 'harmonions and barrel-organs' referred to by Thomas Hardy. The skill of these musicians varied considerably, with diarist Emily Hall writing in 1846 of 'the wretched little noise-makers of West Wickham' who played in this Kent parish church!

### **The Guests**

One factor that hasn't changed is that parish churches have always been open to all, even when a family ceremony is in progress. Thus wedding invitations were generally unnecessary, for all the locals knew when a wedding was taking place and, if they had the opportunity to do so, would join the congregation. Indeed, anyone was (and still is) free to wander in and out of the church, whether for private prayer or out of plain curiosity!

While affluent families issued invitations to the ceremony and the wedding feast, it was not unusual for the poorer bride and groom to have no guests at all. In such cases the parish clerk and a churchwarden would act as the legally-required witnesses. These occasions can be easily recognised by looking at the parish registers, where the same witness names occur regularly, often over many years, indicating that no other person was present to act as a witness.

After such small, quiet ceremonies, there was rarely a wedding breakfast or honeymoon, but where there were celebrations after the service, many locals would have joined the procession back to the venue. This might have been at the family home, or in an agricultural building such as a barn, or in the local ale-house. Keeping out

unwanted people from farm or ale-house wedding breakfasts was well-nigh impossible, so the newly-weds didn't always know who would turn up for the festivities. Sometimes the clergy, witnesses and employers of the bride and groom would be given a verbal invitation. While farmers were often happy to attend the wedding celebrations of their lowly employees, employers of a more sedate and refined nature were rarely to be seen on such occasions!

### **The Wedding Breakfast**

Today's elaborate receptions do bear some resemblance to those enjoyed in the past by people of great wealth. Many guests, all beautifully dressed, would be seated at table, waited on by staff, and presented with a number of courses, sometimes as many as fifteen or twenty. In Elizabethan times this may well have included peacock (often presented with an exotic display of the bird's feathers), and a variety of spiced sweetmeats. Spices were very expensive, and the extensive use of such ingredients was a statement of the family's wealth. In later years there would still have been as many as ten courses at a high status wedding, and while the meats tended to be less exotic, desserts with hothouse fruits, and sorbets made with ice from an ice-house, were statements of wealth. Guests at earlier weddings would have been offered ale and various forms of wine, but by Victorian times ale was seen as a drink for the lower classes, and wines and spirits were more in evidence at high status weddings.

For working families, things were very different. A snatched half-day wedding might be attended by a few members of the family and such friends who weren't working. Sometimes only the bride and groom and two witnesses – often the parish clerk and another local official – were the only people present. A small family party might adjourn to a local tavern, or to the home of the bride's family, to share a simple meal. Ale was the most frequent drink – often because it was the safest! Any children present would have been given small ale – the weak liquid produced from a third fermentation.

*Right: A 19th-century wedding breakfast in a local tavern*



## The Wedding Cake

The wedding cake has evolved from the first century wedding loaf, used by Romans and early Christians for a breaking-of-bread ceremony. The bride and groom shared the loaf, which represented sufficiency and prosperity, while guests scrambled for the crumbs in the hope that they, too, would share that prosperity.

The tradition of the wedding loaf continued into mediaeval times, by which time an alternative of stacking buns in front of the bride and groom, sometimes coated with a layer of icing drizzled over them, had also come into fashion. If the bride and groom could kiss one another over the top of the bun-heap, this was considered a good omen. The buns would then be shared out among the guests, again as a symbol of sharing the bridal couple's prosperity. One wonders whether this custom is the origin of the phrase 'bun fight'!

It is said that a 17th-century French chef in an English noble household was so appalled by the bun-stacking that he devised a cake made in layers and then stacked. Again, only the very wealthy could afford the dried fruits now used in wedding cakes. Nuts and fresh fruits in season could be used in the cake, but for many weddings the cake, like other elements of the day, was plain and simple. To preserve the cake, it was coated with a thick layer of lard, which had to be removed shortly before the meal. Over the years the recipe for this preservative coating was sweetened and flavoured, often with almonds, gradually evolving into the marzipan and icing we know today. White icing, requiring the finest refined sugar, was too expensive for most couples, and didn't become fashionable until the very late 19th century.



30



*A modern stacked bun wedding cake, perhaps too tall to kiss over!*

In the poorest families, the ingredients for a cake were often too difficult or too expensive to obtain, and the guests would have a bride pie. This would have been filled with minced beef or mutton, perhaps with suet, and baked into

*A bride pie, with decorated pastry*

it would have been a simple ring with a glass stone. It was believed that the lady who found the ring would be the next one to marry.

Traditionally the cake was cut by the bride alone, as a symbol of her domestic hospitality. However, as tiered cakes became fashionable in the early 20th century, the icing had to be hard enough to support the layers above, and was very difficult to cut. It was usually necessary for the groom to give a helping hand – hence the modern practice of both bride and groom cutting the cake.

Throughout the years there have been many traditions attached to the cake. An unmarried female guest would sleep with a piece of wedding cake under the pillow in the hope of dreaming of her future husband! And tiered cakes have led to the tradition of couples keeping the top tier either as a celebration cake for their first anniversary, or as a Christening cake for the first child.

### **Leaving the celebrations**

The word confetti has the same root as comfit (a dry sweetmeat) and confectionary, and comes from the ancient practice of throwing sweetmeats at the departing couple. Nuts and rice were also thrown, all again symbolic of wishing the couple prosperity and fertility. There is a mistaken belief that throwing rice is a particularly American custom, but this custom can be found in many cultures. Reports of my grandparents' wedding in London in 1894 record that rice was thrown. Flower petals, often carried in a wicker basket, were thrown at country weddings, and these are now replicated in paper in modern confetti.

Shoes, whether thrown to guests, or tied on to the vehicle carrying the couple away, also feature in many regions. Shoes or slippers represented the dominance of a man over his wife. In families that could afford shoes, removing a woman's shoes gave her father or husband the upper hand, as she would be unable to leave the house without them. Likewise, shoes or slippers were often used for chastisement, and many a man kept a slipper by the bed, ready to punish his wife or children if they went against his wishes or misbehaved in any way! The throwing of a bridal shoe represented the separation of a bride from the authority of her father. Tying shoes to the carriage or car of

*A traditional wicker basket filled with natural rose petals, the fore-runner of paper confetti.*



the departing couple reminded her that she was still subject to male authority!

Today, some brides prefer to throw the bouquet, or even the garter, rather than ruin an expensive pair of shoes. However, in some rural areas it is still the custom for the bride to leave her flowers on the grave of a parent or sibling, to show that their dead loved one has not been forgotten on this important day. This custom is also observed by brides in the royal family who, when the festivities are over, leave their flowers on the tomb of the unknown soldier in Westminster Abbey.

### The Honeymoon

The concept of taking an exotic holiday, or indeed any holiday at all, immediately after a wedding is a very recent one. For working people, holidays were originally restricted to holy days and special festivals, and paid holidays were unheard of before the 20th century. If the newly-weds wanted to keep their jobs, most would have had to be back at work bright and early the next day! Even if they had generous employers who were willing to allow them a few days off, the couple wouldn't have been able to afford the loss of pay for more than a day or so.

For couples from wealthy families with more than one home, there might be a month at the family's country estate, or in a rented property considered suitable for the occasion, but rarely would the newly-weds have ventured very far afield. Even Queen Victoria and Prince Albert went no further than Windsor Castle, and George V and Queen Mary honeymooned at Sandringham!



The term honeymoon originally referred to the first lunar month of a marriage. In the largely rural economies of times past, the months were reckoned by the phases of the moon. In coastal and tidal areas fishing was clearly regulated by the moon, and inland the planting of seeds was also regulated in the same way. Success or failure of fishing and agriculture depended on working in harmony with the moon's phases. In the same way, it was seen as important that



*A cask of mead, the traditional honeymoon drink from ancient times. Where better to find it than in Devon!*

the first lunar month of a marriage should be successful and fertile.

The honey refers to the practice of drinking mead (honey-wine) during that first lunar month. Some say the tradition dates back to ancient times when raiders carried off maidens and took them for their wives. But there is evidence that drinking mead was the custom in peaceful marriages too. Traditionally, brides were expected to be chaste and demure, with no knowledge of what the intimate side of marriage involved. Although this expectation was not always the reality, it was recognised that while grooms would be eager and lusty, and therefore perhaps inconsiderate, brides would be nervous and perhaps scared. Mead was believed to combine the aphrodisiac qualities of wine with the sweetness of honey, and drinking it was believed to make the bride less reticent and the groom more gentle and considerate. To ensure the success and fertility of the marriage, during the first lunar month the bride and groom would drink mead each night before retiring to bed – literally the honey-moon.



When the couple returned to their home, whether at the beginning or the end of the honeymoon, it was, and still is, customary for the groom to carry the bride over the threshold. Some believe it derives from a superstition that it's unlucky for the bride to stumble on the threshold. However, this begs the question of what happens if the groom stumbles – with the bride in his arms! Another theory is that it's considered unlucky to enter a house with the left foot first, but again, there are better ways of avoiding this. The likeliest origin is that it is yet another symbol of male dominance – the groom controls the bride's movements, and she goes where he carries!

Today, much of the symbolism of these customs has been forgotten, and in some cases, perhaps it's just as well! However, some are worth understanding, observing and even reviving, if you're planning a truly traditional English wedding.

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### Postscript

Sadly, unforeseen circumstances have made it impossible to complete this issue according to schedule. The Committee has therefore decided that we should combine this issue and the Winter one within one set of covers, and post the combined 60-page issue during the winter months. I apologise for this. **Ed**

# *WITHERIDGE TIMES*

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Winter 2011

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## *Letter from the*

## *Editor*



Dear Friends

My letter for this page was intended to convey my very best wishes to all our members for a joyful Christmas and a healthy and happy new year.

Sadly, for the Cook family, Christmas largely passed us by. Roy and I were unexpectedly away from home for much of December, and when we returned in January, things were not easy. So here we are, with the new year no longer very new, and this issue of *The Witheridge Times* still incomplete. I can only apologise, and hope that when this finally reaches you, it proves worth the wait, and that the article on The Twelve Days of a 21st-Century Christmas (pages 56-60), although no longer seasonal, will still make you smile.

The key research feature in this issue (pages 44-54) will be of particular interest to all those descended from **William James Witheridge** (1856-1919) of Plymouth. Tracing the history of his parents, William and Mary Ann, and his half-siblings, has taken many a long year. Even now, there is much more to discover. But I hope that putting together what we now know, will bring a better understanding of this large and complicated family. And for all those with connections to the Plymouth area, some interesting developments in the saga of the West Devon Record Office in Plymouth are reported on page 55.

Also of key importance is the information regarding our 2012 Reunion and AGM (pages 38-43). This year we celebrate the Witheridge FHS 25th Anniversary, and we hope to see many of you at our special celebration in Tiverton. Even those who aren't able to join us can still participate by entering our photo and poetry competitions (see page 39), and by sending your absentee AGM votes (see page 42). There's a Reunion and AGM booking form on page 60. Please return this to me as soon as possible, and by Friday 15 May at the latest, so that we can have some idea of how many people to cater for.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Tiverton, and send love and best wishes to you all.

*Kim*

## Family News



### Wedding in Wales

Congratulations to **Rebecca Davey**, daughter of **Chris and Liz Davey**, on her marriage to **George Robinson**. The couple, pictured left, who met at a house-warming party in London in 2007, were married on 1 October 2011 in the romantic setting of Cardiff

Castle. Chris and Liz (who is descended from William Witheridge, 1806-1890, of Dittisham and Halwell), are pictured with with Rebecca and George (right).

After a honeymoon in Dubai and the Maldives, Rebecca and George have settled in their new home in St Albans, Hertfordshire.



### Gathering in Australia

As usual, **Judith and Allan Witheridge**, our stalwart Australian representatives,

have organised the annual Witheridge picnic at Greenwell Point, near Nowra, NSW. This is where ancestor **Philemon Witheridge**, a coastguard originally from Ilfracombe, and his wife **Mary Carvath**, eventually settled in Australia, fishing the local waters, and farming.

At this year's picnic, on 15 May, all those attending received special coasters, which had been specially printed and laminated by Judith and Allan, showing the Witheridge town crest.

We hope to have some photos of the picnic for the next issue of *The Witheridge Times*.



*Left: A modern map of Greenwell Point, with its sheltered harbour, an ideal spot for a Devonshire mariner and his family to settle.*

## Alan Smith

It is with deep sorrow that we report the death, on 21 November 2011, of **Alan Smith**, husband of **Alison** (Bradworthy branch), father of **Philip Milnes-Smith** and **Catherine Shingler**, father-in law of **Geoff Shingler**, and grandfather of **Hannah**.

Alan, a professional horticulturalist, had been ill for some months with a very aggressive brain tumour.

All members of the family are members of the Witheridge FHS, and Alan and Alison have been members for over ten years. In that time, their support, and that of whole family, has been immensely valuable. A full appreciation of Alan's life will appear in the next issue of *The Witheridge Times*, but meanwhile, we know all members will join us in sending heartfelt condolences to Alison and the family.

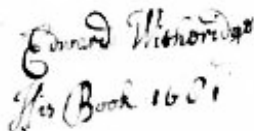
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## *Welcome to a New Member*

We are delighted to welcome new member **Sarah Massey**, of Moles End, The Green, Stadhampton. Oxford OX44 7UB. Sarah is descended from Edward Witheridge, born in 1616 in Barnstaple, who captained many ships trading with the Americas. This is her Witheridge ancestry:

1) Sarah J Massey; 2) William Joseph Massey (1922-2008), 3) Stella Mary Lancaster (1922-2003); 6) Stephen Lancaster (1894-1971), 7) Norah Beatrice Stileman (1891-1967); 12) Thomas G Lancaster (1858-1940), 13) Effie Priscilla Buxton (1861-1940); 26) Thomas Fowell Buxton (1822-1908), 27) Rachel Jane Gurney (1823-1905); 54) Samuel Gurney (1786-1856), 55) Elizabeth Sheppard (c1783-1855); 110) James Sheppard (1754-1812), 111) Sarah Gurney (c1755-1838); 220) James Sheppard (1714- ??), 221) Anna Harle (1721-??); 440) Joseph Sheppard (c1678-1751), 441) Sarah Terry (1676-??); 882) James Terry; 883) Willmott Witheridge (1651-1732); 1766) Edward Witheridge (1616-1697).

Members who were at the 2010 Reunion will remember the visit of Rob Calder, who brought with him a copy of the 1641 edition of Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. This book, inscribed 'Edward Witheridge His Book 1681', records the birth of his daughter Willmott on 5 August 1651. A later hand notes that on 18 September 1751 'Joseph Sheppard Senr Departed this Life att 12 a clock att night, aged abt 73 years' – useful information for Sarah!



Sarah, we hope you enjoy your membership, and we look forward to helping you with further research.

# *Witheridge Family History Society*

## *Silver Jubilee Reunion & AGM*

*Saturday 30 June and Sunday 1 July 2012*

*Tiverton, Devon*

The AGM and all Saturday events will be held in

*Tiverton Town New Hall*

### **Timetable**

#### **Saturday 30 June**

10.00 am–11.00 am	<b>Welcome, registration, and coffee.</b> Please hand in any competition entries (see page 39) soon as you arrive.
as	
11.00 am–12.00 noon	<b>AGM</b> (Full agenda on pages 40-42) <sup>1</sup>
12.00 noon–1.00 pm	<b>Competition judging</b> by all present.
1.00 pm–2.00 pm	<b>Lunch</b> (local pub lunch).
2.00 pm–2.45 pm	<b>Presentations/Brains Trust</b> Enjoy presentations prepared by various members, including a look at our 25 years, and learn more about your own family history.
2.45 pm–3.15 pm	<b>Competition Results and Prizegiving</b>
3.15 pm–4.45 pm	<b>Social time, with refreshments</b>
4.45 pm	<b>President's closing address</b>
5.00 pm	<b>Leave hall</b>
7.00 pm	<b>Evening meal</b> together in local pub/restaurant

#### **Sunday 1 July**

9.30 am	Meet for outing (car sharing) to a place chosen in advance by those attending.
10.00 am	Meet at outing venue
1.00 pm	Meet for lunch at outing venue.

<sup>1</sup> *All paid-up members of the Witheridge FHS who are 16 or over will be entitled to vote at the AGM. Non-members and under-16s are welcome to attend the AGM, but may not vote.*

## *Reunion Competitions*

Once again we're holding three competitions, and hope that this year we'll have even more entries than we did last year.

- 1 **Most interesting item(s) of family memorabilia.** Each item must be clearly labelled, with some indication of age and purpose and, if possible, information about the original owner. Items may include photos, documents, tools, articles of clothing or accessories, small household items, toys, motoring accessories, or anything portable relevant to the owner's family history.
- 2 **Poetry competition, any subject, maximum 64 lines.** Entries should be typed, not handwritten, with a title, and a label with the author's name on the back of the entry. The author's name should not appear on the front of the page, and the poem should not previously have been entered into any competition.
- 3 **Photo competition, landscape or place of historic interest.** Photos may be colour or black and white, maximum size A5, and should have a label on the back stating the entrant's name, and the title of the photo, with an indication of location. We will do our best to print emailed entries as truly as possible to the original, but cannot guarantee an exact match. Entries should not have been previously entered into any competition.

In categories 2 and 3 there will be **separate sections for children aged 15 or under**. Children's entries should include the age of the entrant on the relevant label(s). Entrants may submit up to six entries in each category.

Those attending the Reunion should hand their entries in on arrival. 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 26 June (UK time).

Entries will be displayed anonymously and numbered, and those attending (including children) may all vote for entries in each category. When votes have been counted and checked, the winners will be announced and prizes given.

Poems and photos entered into the competition may be published in future issues of *The Witheridge Times*. However, photos will have to be reproduced in black and white, but may, at a later date, be included in colour in the Members' Only section of the Witheridge FHS web-site, once this is available.

## *AGM 2012 - Agenda*

- 1 Chairman's opening and welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of the 2011 AGM, held at Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent. These are published on pages 7–15 of the Summer-Autumn 2011 issue of *Witheridge Times*.
- 4 Matters arising from these minutes
- 5 Matters arising from 2012 Officers' Reports  
These reports will be emailed or mailed to members shortly.
- 6 Election of Officers and Committee Members  
The following have been nominated for the posts listed, and have agreed to stand.

**Chairman**

**Jason Cook**

Proposed by: Richard Witheridge

Seconded by: Joyce Browne

**Vice Chairman**

**Richard Witheridge**

Proposed by: Pamela Glynn

Seconded by: Jason Cook

**Secretary**

*no nomination yet received*

**Membership Secretary**

**Richard Witheridge**

Proposed by: Jason Cook

Seconded by: Liz Davey

**Treasurer**

**Richard Witheridge**

Proposed by: Barbara Finemore

Seconded by: Kim Cook

**Assistant Treasurer**

**Maureen Witheridge**

Proposed by: Pamela Glynn

Seconded by: Barbara Finemore

**Editor and Publisher**

**Kim Cook**

Proposed by: Joyce Bowne

Seconded by: Richard Witheridge

**Research Co-ordinator**

**Kim Cook**

Proposed by: Pamela Glynn

Seconded by: Barbara Finemore

**Webmaster**

**Bill Dwyne**

Proposed by: Richard Witheridge

Seconded by: Kim Cook

**Committee Members**

**Pamela Glynn**



Proposed by: Richard Witheridge

Seconded by: Roy Cook

**Roy Cook**

Proposed by: Joyce Browne

Seconded by: Maureen Witheridge

**Liz Davey**

Proposed by: Kim Cook

Seconded by: Richard Witheridge

## 7 Overseas Representatives

The following agreed to continue as the Society's Overseas Representatives, and the Society is delighted to accept their offer.

**Australia:** Judith and Allan Witheridge

**New Zealand:** Velma Metcalfe

**North America:** *This post is vacant. The Society may appoint one representative to cover both USA and Canada, or a separate representative for each country. If any member is, or knows someone who might be, willing to help with this, please contact Membership Secretary Richard Witheridge for further information.*

## 8 Appointment of Auditor

We are very grateful to Mr Derek Nixon, FCIS, a retired accountant, who has kindly agreed to act as our Auditor again this year.

## 9 Proposal to appoint a Publicity Officer

Proposed by: Kim Cook ;

Seconded by: Joyce Browne

Currently the Society has no-one responsible for Publicity, and we need to keep the Society's name in relevant sections of the media if we are to grow. The post (whether elected or co-opted) would involve informing GENEVA (the genealogy events web-site), the FFHS, the Guild of One-Name Studies, the FH press, and occasionally local/regional media of events and research projects.

## 10 Proposal to continue the Society's membership of the Federation of Family History Societies and the Guild of One-Name Studies until further notice

Proposed by: Joyce Browne; Seconded by: Kim Cook

The Society will continue in Membership of the **Federation of Family History Societies**, and the **Guild of One-Name Studies** until further notice. The Guild membership is currently held in the name of Kim Cook, as our Research Co-ordinator. Kim has agreed to relinquish the Guild holding should she at any time cease to be the

Society's Research Co-ordinator, so that her successor in this post will be free to take up the holding.

- 11 **Proposal to promote WFHS on the Federation of Family History Societies's stall at the 2013 *Who Do You Think You Are* exhibition**  
Proposed by: Kim Cook                      Seconded by: Joyce Browne
  - 12 **Charity Christmas Card for 2012 to be: Children's Hospice South West** (caring for very ill children in SW)  
Proposed by: Pamela Glynn                Seconded by: Derek Glynn  
**Mind** (Mental Health Charity)  
Proposed by: Liz Davey                      Seconded by: Chris Davey
  - 13 **Date and venue for 2013 Reunion**  
No proposals or suggestions for the date and venue have yet been received. Any ideas received at or before the meeting will be discussed and voted on.
  - 14 **Any other business**
- 

## *AGM — Voting and Absentee Voting*

All full members, and additional family members over the age of 16 who are covered by that membership, are entitled to vote, provided the membership is fully paid up at the date of the meeting.

Any voting member unable to attend may register an absentee vote by post or email. **All absentee votes must be received at least four full days before the meeting, ie by Tuesday 26 June 2012.**

Postal votes must be sent to the Hon President at Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6NS, England, in a sealed envelope clearly marked 'Postal Vote'. Votes registered via e-mail must be sent to witheridge1987@aol.com, with 'Absentee Vote' in the subject box. Votes received by this mailbox will be printed off and taken to the meeting, but neither these, nor the postal votes, will be counted until the votes of those present at the meeting have been cast. Should more than one vote be received from a member, only the last received for that member will be counted.

Any AGM motion concerning the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of votes cast in order to be passed, but other motions can be passed by a simple majority. In the event of an equal number of votes being cast for and against a motion (except motions amending the Constitution), the Chairman of the meeting has a casting vote.

## *Accommodation in Tiverton Area*

Here is a selection of hotels in the Tiverton area, with a guide to prices, which may vary between now and your booking date. There are other local hotels, and inclusion in this list does not imply a recommendation.

### **Lodgehill Hotel, Bickleigh Road, Tiverton** **01884 251200**

Family-run, with 10 en-suite rooms, including Family Suite of 2 connecting rooms. The rates shown are for B&B. Dinner is available in the licensed restaurant, booked in advance, for £15.00 per head.

Family suite £90.00 Double/twin £60.00 Single £35.00

### **Best Western Tiverton Hotel, Tiverton** **01884 256120**

Room only rate Double £80.00\* Single £50.00\*

B & B Rate Double £90.00\* Single £57.50\*

Children 1 child in double room, no room charge, but there will be a charge for breakfast

2-course meal £13.00 per head 3-course meal £15.00 per head

Bar meals £6.00-£7.00 per head

\* *These concessionary rates apply only if 5 rooms booked together.*

### **Brambles, Whitnage, Sampford Peverell** **01884 829211**

Grade II listed hotel, about 4 miles east of Tiverton, near M5 J 27. All rooms en-suite with flat-screen TV and dvd/cd player; garden; free wi-fi in public areas; large gardens, free parking

B&B rate Double £79.95 (2 people only) Single occupancy £59.95

Room only Double £63.95 Single occupancy £51.95

Children 1 extra bed in room, £7.50 (0-2) or £15.00 (2-17) per night

### **Tiverton Travelodge, Sampford Peverell** **0871 984 6057**

About 1 mile from Tiverton Parkway station, near M5 J27, this has basic room-only accommodation, with free on-site parking. Rates shown are for bookings made well in advance, but rise if less notice is given.

Double room rate £54.00

Family Room £54.00 (with pull-out bed for 1 child)

### **Silverton Inn, Silverton** **01392 860196**

Inn (free house) about 6 miles south of Tiverton, with 4 B&B rooms. Home-made local food, beer etc; free on-street parking, or free car park 1 minute walk away.

Double £55.00 (shared shower) Single £35.00

### **Padbrook Park Hotel, Cullompton** **01884 836100**

About 5 miles from Tiverton, all rooms en-suite; rooms for disabled at same rate; golf, crazy golf, indoor bowling, fitness suite; 100 acres parkland, woodland trails; freeview tv; optional broadband/wi-fi (chargeable)

Room only rate Twin/Double £80.00 All meals extra.

# *The Mystery Mariner and His Lady*

by **Kim Cook**



For many years **Joyce Browne** and I have been on the trail of a Witheridge family based in Plymouth.

In the 1970s, before the Witheridge FHS was founded, I had made contact with **Lily Avent** (1920-2003), the daughter of **John James Witheridge** and **Lily Brown**, of Plymouth. Lily put me in touch with her younger sister **Jean Lucock**, and both shared with me their recollections of their father's family. They remembered three uncles, **Ernie**, **Joe** and **Stan Witheridge**, an aunt **Polly**, and an aunt **Lily** whose married name was **Dungey**. Lily and Jean thought that their father had been named after his father, John James Witheridge, a fisherman, There was also a vague story about someone who had died in a fire, but the details were very hazy.

I used this information to put together a provisional family tree, but the needs of a young family, and a part-time job, made it impossible for me to do further research at that time.

At our first Witheridge meeting in 1987 we welcomed **Malcolm Witheridge** and members of his family from Marazion, Cornwall. Malcolm, his twin sister **Margaret**, and their elder brother **Michael**, were the children of **Stanley Witheridge** (1909-1958) and **Phyllis Bishop**. Stanley's parents were **Joseph Fred Witheridge** (1881-1918) and his wife **Mabel**, and he remembered uncles **Bill**, **Stan**, and **Ernie Witheridge**, and an aunt whose surname was **Dungey**! There was also reference to an aunt believed to have died in a fire!

While the similar Christian names might have been co-incidence, the story of the fire and the name Dungey, convinced me that these two families had to be related, and a check through my Witheridge card index proved that they were. However, there were a number of discrepancies to be ironed out.

In 1987, with no Internet listings, census information was available only in a few record offices, and was searchable only by address, not name. Ordering GRO certificates involved a trip to London.

The search was made even more difficult because it held almost all the pitfalls that can possibly be encountered! Family stories that, while essentially true, were inaccurate in many details, marriages in unexpected places at unexpected times (and sometimes not occurring

at all!), births registered late, children listed under the name of step-fathers, and census entries very oddly transcribed and therefore indexed wrongly – all these combined to hamper Joyce and me as we struggled over many years to unravel the story of this family.

As the search progressed, the conjectural family tree was updated and amended. Joyce and I, and also Richard Witheridge, had all worked for many years putting together an index of all Witheridge and Wetheridge births, marriages and deaths from 1837 to the late 1980s. This was a major tool when it came to checking the tree.

The grandfather of Lily and Jean proved to be not another John James, but **William James Witheridge**, born 1856. The uncle Stan remembered by both sides of the family proved to be **Arthur Stanley Witheridge**, born in 1890. Polly was the nickname usually given to girls called Mary Ann, and a check of the birth records identified a **Mary Ann Witheridge**, born in 1877, who fitted into the tree.

In 1991 we ordered the birth certificate of **Joseph Fred Witheridge**, grandfather of our Cornish members. This showed that he was the son of **William James Witheridge**, a fisherman, and **Mary Ann Witheridge**, formerly **Walters**. Joseph's date of birth was given as 21 June 1881, in the family home at 16 New Street, Plymouth, and the birth was registered on 25 August 1881. The gap between the two dates is well over the 42 days allowed for birth registration, and later information proved that the gap was even wider! Family information also indicated that Joseph Fred's son, Joe, had gone to Scotland with his wife and daughter.

With confirmation that both families were descended from William James and Mary Ann, the family tree now showed that they were the parents of at least 10, and probably 11, children. However, there were still many discrepancies to be resolved.

Among those mentioned by our Cornish members was an aunt **Edith Witheridge** who had married a man named Daly and had a daughter, Rosie. No marriage or birth was found but, while checking for a possible earlier marriage I found that Edith M Witheridge had married, in 1931, **Richard C Burton**, and they had had two daughters. In

*Below: New Street, where the Witheridge family lived in 1881, looks very much smarter today than it did then!*



1948 in Plymouth, Edith M Burton married **William H Daley**, but I have still found no birth registration for the daughter known as Rosie.

Trying to take the provisional family tree further back, in 1992 we ordered the GRO certificate for the birth, in 1856, of William James Witheridge, the common ancestor of both the families who had started us on this research. This certificate showed that William James, born on 28 November 1856 at 1 Johnson's Ope, Parade, Plymouth St Andrew, was the son of **William Witheridge** (deceased), merchant seaman, and his mother was **Mary Ann Witheridge**, late **Bounty**, formerly **Penrose**.

Interestingly, the name Johnson's Ope is believed to refer to a lane, or opening, in the waterfront, by Johnson's Quay. The Johnson brothers owned quarries on Dartmoor, and used their own railway to bring granite to their quay in Sutton Pool.

By 1992, with the birth details of William James, the conjectural tree that Joyce and I had put together over so many years, was coming together nicely (see opposite page), but there was still a long way to go before it could be completed and confirmed.

A search for the marriage certificate of William Witheridge, mariner, and Mary Ann Bounty/Penrose has still produced no result, despite years of searching. Without it, we have no name for William's father, making it almost impossible to determine which William Witheridge was his father. Theoretically, William could have been any age from 16 to 80, and come from any part of Devon, or beyond, and there were scores of William Witheridges who might have been Mary Ann's spouse/partner. Who was the mystery mariner? We decided to follow the old French adage, '*cherchez la femme*', in the hope that Mary Ann's history might yield some clues about William Witheridge.

The search for his lady, Mary Ann Bounty/Penrose also led us a merry dance, and was very confusing. What follows is a chronological history of the people, not of the research!

**Mary Ann's** surname at birth proved to be **Penrose**. Born c 1828 in Devon, she was the third child of **Matthew Penrose**, born c 1788-9 in Devon, and his wife, also **Mary Ann**. I haven't yet found a baptism record for her, but although she claimed to have been born in Plymouth, I suspect she may have been born in Tavistock, as her eldest brother **Alfred Cotton Penrose**, born c 1822, and younger sister **Susan Penrose**, born c 1830, both gave this as their place of birth. However, by 1841 Mary Ann was living with her parents, two brothers and two sisters at Gibbons Lane, Plymouth Charles. Matthew was described as a labourer, although Mary Ann later described him as a mason.



Matthew Penrose died in Plymouth in the summer of 1846, when he would have been about 58, and his wife Mary Ann was buried in Plymouth Charles on 23 March 1851, aged 60.

Between these events, on 12 April 1848 in Stoke Damerel, the young Mary Ann Penrose married for the first time. The groom was **Richard Bounty**, and Mary Ann gave her late father's occupation as mason. On 28 September 1848, they had a son, **Richard Matthew Penrose Bounty**, who was baptised on 11 October that year in St Andrew, Plymouth. The family was then living in Southside Street, and Richard was a labourer.

What happened in the years immediately following is still a mystery. No trace has been found of Richard, Mary Ann or young Richard in 1851, either separately or together. Richard has not been found in any other census, before or after, and I have so far found no relevant record of any birth, death, other marriage, or military service, either in England or overseas. Another mystery, yet to be solved!

The next time Mary Ann appears in an official record is in November 1856. She is now **Mary Ann Witheridge**, registering birth of her son, **William James Witheridge**. Having found no death for Richard Bounty senior, and no marriage for Mary Ann and William Witheridge, we are left wondering what really happened. Eight months after the birth of William, on 13 July 1857, in Holy Trinity Church, Plymouth, Mary Ann Witheridge, a widow, said to be 25, daughter of Matthew Penrose a mason, married **George Brent Taylor**, who had been born c 1836 in Turnchapel. In 1851 George had been living with his father John, a mariner, mother Susan, and three sisters, in Plymstock.

Mary Ann's age at the time of her marriage to George, suggests that was just 16 when she married Richard Bounty. However, in the 1861 census, less than three years after she and George had married, Mary Ann admitted to being 30, although she was probably 32! George Taylor, a 24-year-old mariner, fisherman, Mary Ann Taylor, Richard Bounty and William Witheridge were all at 5 Pins Lane, in the Vintry area of Plymouth St Andrew. Richard Bounty was an apprentice fisherman, William Witheridge, 3, was a scholar, and they were joined by a half-sister, 2-month-old **Mary Ann Taylor**.

By 1871 two more Taylor children, **Joseph**, 8, and **Thomas**, 1, had been born in Plymouth. Sadly a son, born in 1866 and named **George Brent Taylor** after his father, died in 1867 before reaching his first birthday. Their daughter Mary Ann, now 10, was still with the family, living in Tenements at Southside Street, an area with which Mary Ann Taylor must have been familiar, as she had lived in that street some 22

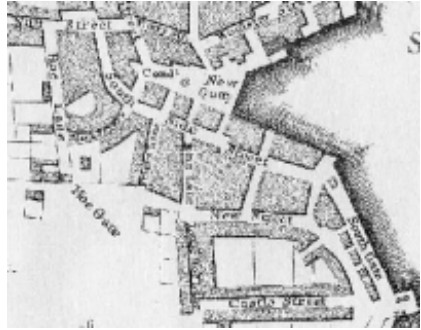


years earlier! As for William Witheridge, who would then have been 13, there is no sign of him with the family, or anywhere else.

**Richard Bounty** was no longer with the family, as he had married, in 1870, **Elizabeth Walters**. During the next 21 years Richard and Elizabeth had seven sons and five daughters! (see family tree on page 52). Richard, who worked all his life as a fisherman in Plymouth, died there in 1899 at the age of 50.

However, his mother and step-father left Plymouth for a while, and moved to London. In 1881 George, a 44-year-old mariner, Mary Ann, now said to be 50, with 12-year-old son Thomas, and 16-year-old niece **Priscilla Rendall**, were living at 48 Culloden Street, in the Bromley St Leonard district of Tower Hamlets. All were listed as being born in Plymouth. George, a mariner, was presumably working on the Thames.

Missing from the family home were daughter Mary Ann, who would have been about 20, and son Joseph, who would have been 18. However, Joseph can't have been very far away, for on 22 April 1886, in Poplar parish church, **Joseph Brent Taylor**, said to be a 23-year-old master mariner, married **Clara Amy Hooper**, also 23, daughter of a ships' chandler. Later documents show that although Clara was a British subject, she had been born in Antwerp. Joseph's father, George Brent Taylor, was one of the witnesses. Joseph was a mariner all his life. In 1901 he was a 2nd Officer, living at 5 Victoria Avenue, Kingston-upon-Hull, with his wife, listed just as Amy, Clara, their 14-year-old daughter **Lydia Taylor**, also born in Antwerp, and his mother-in-law **Hannah Hooper**. Joseph and Clara were still in Hull in 1911, occupying 6 rooms at 13 Cranbrook Avenue, Newland. They had been married 25 years, and had 1 child, still living. Joseph was a relief officer in the merchant service. However, his name had been crossed through, probably because he'd been called away to sea on duty, and Clara signed the census form, declaring that there were no males and three females in the household. The other two women were Clara's mother, Hannah Hooper, and her sister, Hilda Maud Hooper. Lydia was not at home, and may perhaps have been married by this time.



*This map shows Southside Street and Pins Lane, both home to Mary Ann and her family at various times.*

# Descendants of Richard Matthew Penrose Bounty

half-brother to William James Witheridge  
(conjectural, as at December 2011)

Richard 1) = Mary Ann Bounty   Penrose m1846   b1828   d	= 2) William   Witheridge   m ??   Taylor   m1857	= 3) George   Brent   Taylor   m1857
Elizabeth = Richard Matthew Walters   P Bounty b1851   b1848P d1939   m1870P   d1899P		
William James Witheridge b1856 (see page 47)		

Ernest = Annie William   E Bounty   Kessel b1871P   b1867 m1895P   dau b1894 m11892P d1936P   d1894 d1942P	= Fred'k Richard Bounty   Richard b1873P   b1871P m1894P   m1892P d1942P	= Eliza Greep Bounty   b1885P m1894P	= Eliza Walters   Newcombe Bounty   b1880 b1883P   b1880 m1903P   b1885P d1971P   b1885P d1957P	= George = Grace Bounty   S Bounty   Wills m1908P   1887P d1957P   d1960 d1969	= Minnie = Gert'de Vict'ia Bounty   Sophie b1888P   Spear m1920   b1887P d1978   m1910P d1978	= Wm Bailey Bounty   John F b1891   Roose m1910   Roose d1978	
William Charles b1897   b1898 d1952 Annie Elizab'th b1899 d1997 Ernest Richard m1923 Hooper b1901 d1973 Muriel May b1901 d1973 Percy Bounty b1911 m1923 Marshall b1911 d1945 Kessel Bounty b1911 d1945 Hooper b1927 Horne b1927 d1945	Richard Solomon Bounty b1900 m1921 Blowers	Charles Richard b1904 m1930 Tucker	Grace Elizabeth Bounty b1916 m1914 St Claire Wiltshire	Barbara Bounty b1916 m1914 St Claire	Constance Sophia E Bounty b1911 m1936 Dobson	Violet M Bounty b1912 m1937 Hayes-James Smerdon Dunn Moon	Daisy E M Roose b1912 m1935 Daisy M Roose b1915 m1941 Dorothy B Roose m1941

Notes: Ernest William and Frederick Richard were twins. There is insufficient space to show these children known to have died without issue.  
 Parents Richard and Elizabeth: George S Bounty, 1872-1872; Charles Bounty, 1874-1895; Melinda B Bounty, 1876-1880; Eliza A Bounty, 1878-1880.  
 Parents Ernest and Annie: Ellen Bounty, 1895-1896; Ellen Kessel Bounty, 1897-1914; Winifred Kessel Bounty, 1903-1904;  
 Parents Frederick and Eliza: Annie Louise Bounty 1902-1903; at least 2 more Bounty children, parentage not yet known, died young.

A Joseph Brent Taylor, aged 59, died on 10 December 1939, at 194 Beaumont Road, Plymouth, leaving an estate valued at £953 7s 5d. Probate was granted on 12 January 1940 to **Frederick James Willies**, retired Petty Officer, RN. However, this is either a different person, or the age is incorrect, as the Joseph born c 1862, would have been 77. It is more likely that the correct entry is that of Joseph B Taylor who died in Bradford in 1935, aged 73.

By 1891 Mary Ann and George were back in Plymouth, living at 3 Holborn Place, in the Sutton area of Plymouth. George, 54, was now a master mariner, Mary Ann was said to be 60, and 20-year-old Thomas was employed as a railway porter. Their life was clearly more comfortable than it had ever been, for they had a resident domestic servant, 15-year-old Selina Saunders.

Sadly, just a few months later, 54-year-old George died. Shortly after his father's death, **Thomas Brent Taylor** married **Susan Lewis Rendle**, born c 1872, Plymouth, possibly a cousin. In 1901 they were living in 2 rooms at 42 Southside Street (how they all gravitated back there!) with 3 children. Thomas was working as a grocery warehouse labourer. His mother, Mary Ann, a widow with no occupation, said to be 67, was living alone in one room at Trinity House, Friars Lane, Plymouth St Andrew. Finding the correct registration for her death has proved difficult, as her age varies considerably from one document to another. One possibility is the death registration, in Mar qr 1906 in Plymouth, of a **Mary Ann Taylor**, aged 70. Her comfortable life seems to have been very short lived.

Although the story of Mary Ann isn't quite complete, we do now have a very good picture of her life. However, this extensive study has still not provided answers to all the questions, and sadly it sheds no light on **William Witheridge**, her second husband – if indeed they were ever married! No other Witheridge appears on documents, there is no evidence that any Witheridge visited Mary or her family, or that any of them ever visited Witheridge relations. With absolutely no clues from Mary Ann's later life, how can we find this mystery mariner?

The only possibility is a process of elimination, and even that has no guarantees, for we can never be certain that we have checked every single William Witheridge who might have been alive at the time **William James Witheridge** was conceived. Checking all the records available to me at present, I have found over forty Williams born in the years when the father of William James might have been born! Eliminating those known to have died, and those too old to have still

# Descendants of George Brent Taylor

stepfather to William James Witherridge  
(*conjectural, as at December 2011*)



\* For reasons of space, the surname of this couple's children has been abbreviated to Wint.

been at sea in 1856, I then checked the remainder against the census returns for 1841, 1851 and 1861. While it's possible that a mariner might have been at sea for one or more of these censuses, the likelihood of someone not featuring in any of them is fairly slim. Nevertheless, I checked a number of Witheridge wives whose husbands were not at home, in case one of them turned up in a later census and turned out to be called William and working as a mariner. I also examined each entry, not just the index, and discovered a number of mistranscriptions in the indexes, both those indexed as Witheridge who weren't, and people under other names who were really Witheridge. Eliminating these, and those whose families and occupations clearly had no maritime connections – carpenters, masons, tailors, gardeners and farmers – I was left with just three reasonable possibilities.

The oldest is **William Witheridge**, baptised on 10 August 1800 in Thurlestone, who married **Mary Ralph** in Liverpool in 1825. A mariner, he was back in south Devon by 1829, and was at home for the census nights of 1841, 1851, and 1861. He was still working as a mariner in the merchant service when he died in 1870 at sea, off the coast near Malborough and Salcombe. This William would have been 55 when William James Witheridge was conceived, but he seems to have been a staunch family man, and is perhaps the least likely of the three possibilities.

The second is his son, **William George Witheridge**, born in Bantham in 1829, and baptised in Thurlestone on 5 April 1829. Like his father, he was a mariner, and in 1858 he married **Catherine Pepperell**. He wasn't at home in 1841, although he may have been the male servant, aged about 10, who was working for yeoman **Thomas Moore** at Buckland, near Thurlestone. Although he hasn't yet been found in the census returns for 1851 or 1861, he does appear on a number of crew lists in the 1860s and 1870s, working as ship's master for a Mr Cox of Bridport. On 2 January 1866 he was Master on Cox's ship *First Fruit*, preparing to sail via Bristol to the Azores on a voyage lasting six months. However, a footnote adds that the voyage was cancelled. On 5 April 1867 William was again in Bridport, preparing to sail to St John's, Newfoundland, and from there to any port in the Americas, Brazil or the Mediterranean, returning to any port in the United Kingdom, with the voyage to last no more than 12 months. This document was delivered to the shipping master at Liverpool on 2 July 1867. In 1868 he was working on *Pride of the Isles*, with a similar itinerary to that of his previous voyage. On 8 June 1870, William was

back in Dorset, sailing as Master of the *Billow Crest*, in which he had made his previous voyage, as part of a continuous service. Most of the crew had joined in London, and were discharged there on 10 May 1870. In 1871 he was again Master of the *Billow Crest*, having joined her in London on 19 July, and by November 1871 his brother Robert had joined the crew as mate, having previously served on *Pride of the Isles*.

None of these documents gives any indication of where William George was in 1865. He didn't marry until 1858, he was of about the same age as Mary Ann, and he could have been in Plymouth in 1856. However, I've not yet found any suggestion that he was ever ashore in Plymouth. His main ports in the UK seem to have been Bridport, London, and Liverpool. As he hasn't yet been found in the 1861 census, he may have been at sea.

The third possibility is **William Witheridge**, who was baptised in on 13 October 1830 in Combmartin. In 1841 he was at home with his parents, **John Witheridge**, a mason, and his wife **Mary Han(d)cock**. Their three younger sons, **Thomas** (baptised 1835), **John** (baptised 1838), and **James** (baptised 1841), all followed in their father's footsteps and became masons. But, surprisingly, William turns up in 1851 as a seaman. Described as nephew, he was visiting **Elizabeth Boyd**, his father's widowed sister, at her home at 2 South Place, Redcliffe, Bristol.

In later documents relating to the Boyd family, and to William's other siblings, I have found no mention of this William after 1851. No death record has been found for him in England or Wales, or in any of the overseas registers for the period. Various William Witheridges of similar age turn up later in the US and Australia, but it is impossible to determine whether any of these is this William. Others who have researched this particular branch of the Witheridge family have also failed to identify what became of William. Could he have been the mystery mariner who fathered William James Witheridge? Was he lost at sea, or did he emigrate, never knowing that Mary Ann was pregnant? While we might perhaps regard him as a prime suspect, the only way of determining the truth of this is probably by DNA testing.

If DNA from any male-line descendants of **William James Witheridge** could be compared with that of male-line descendants of John and Mary Han(d)cock, and male-line descendants of William and Mary Ralph, we might find an answer. Until then, unless a new document turns up, it seems as though William will have to remain the mystery mariner.

## *News for Researchers*

### **Relocating Plymouth Archives**

As reported in the Spring 2011 issue of *The Witheridge Times*, in 1998, **Plymouth City Council (PCC)** was given a 15-year deadline to upgrade **Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO)** facilities, or have all statutory documents removed into Government care. Years passed in discussion, but no move resulted.

On 1 April 2011, PCC ratified a decision to transfer PWDRO, with PCC's museum, library, and possibly SW Film Archive's collections, to the site of the former Parkside Community College in Devonport, a disused council-owned campus. Moves seemed to be afoot, at last.

Then, in October 2011, this decision was turned on its head. PCC announced that the Parkside campus is to be used as a new University Technical College for Plymouth, due to open in September 2013.

However, with the ownership of the **Royal William Yard** being transferred from the South West Regional Development Agency to PCC, the former cooperage building at the Royal William Yard is now the preferred location for Plymouth's archives and historical artefacts.

PCC's aim is to create a new cultural hub for Plymouth in an area which has recently been developed. with a harbour, housing, restaurants and shops already attracting many visitors. As grant funding will be essential for this ambitious development to go ahead, PCC will be presenting its proposals to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other potential sources of funding.

No estimates have been given on how much progress might be achieved before expiry of the government deadline for rehousing statutory archives. We will keep WFHS members updated as further information on this situation becomes available.

*Right: The Royal William Yard. The former cooperage, planned site of the new Culture Hub, is the trapezium, -shaped building right of centre, set back from the waterfront.*



# *The Twelve Days of a 21st-Century Christmas* — an illustrated diary

by Kim Cook

## Day 1

My true love has sent me a partridge in a pear tree. Such an unusual gift — he must have given it a great deal of thought. I got the gardener to plant the tree, which looks good in the garden. Pears next summer should be tasty, but it's a shame the bird flew away.



## Day 2

Another present — two turtle doves. How delightful! The two doves look so sweet canoodling in the trees. I got the carpenter in to build a dove-cote, so that they can keep warm at night. It makes a lovely garden feature to balance the new tree.

## Day 3

My dearly beloved clearly has a thing about birds! Today he sent me three French hens. I got the carpenter in again, this time to build a hen coop and run, but a local breed like Buff Orpingtons would have been nicer. I just hope French hens don't keep going on strike!



## Day 4

More birds! This time it's four blackbirds, or colly birds as they used to be known. Not sure what to do with them, so got the carpenter to put up four nest boxes in the hope that they will attract four female birds in the spring. The partridge flew back, which was great, so it went into the chicken run with the hens. I ordered half a ton of seed corn to feed the ten birds.

## Day 5

Wow! Five gold rings! Is this a proposal five times over? There's no message, so I'm not really sure. All the rings are the same size, so I put one on each hand, and then tied the other two together on a ribbon around my neck. I had to sell the fifth one to pay the carpenter.





## Day 6

Just when I thought he'd given up on the bird fetish, he sends me six geese! They're great at guarding the property, and their eggs are bigger than the few I get



from those miserable French birds. However, the constant cackling and honking, particularly as they settled in during the morning, has upset the neighbours, who'd been out partying, and came home in the early hours, rather the worse for wear, planning to have a lie-in.



## Day 7

What is it with this man and birds? Today it was seven swans!! The gardener came in to enlarge my little pond to make room for them all to swim around. On the way in he had to dodge the geese guarding the place.

Having worked hard all day with a digger, and made a beautiful lake, he then had his arm broken by an aggressive swan for his pains. I gave him three large goose eggs, and sold two of the rings so that I could pay him compensation for loss of earnings over the next few weeks.

## Day 8

Neighbours called in the council noise abatement team, complaining about the digger noise and the honking of the geese, which promptly chased the council staff off my premises. As the officials and a few bystanders waited on the pavement, eight women turned up with cows, drove them into the front garden, and started milking them! This really got the crowd going, so I tried to placate everyone with fresh milk. Sadly, it didn't have quite the desired effect as someone must have phoned in with another complaint. The next thing I knew was that DEFRA and the RSPCA turned up. Between them, they're going to prosecute me for not having a quota, milking in a public place, not having sterilised milking pails or adequate hand-washing facilities, supplying unpasteurised milk without a licence, failing to comply with health and safety regulations, and also animal cruelty for allowing unqualified workers to handle the cows. I had to feed the milkmaids



and put them up for the night so that they could milk the cows again in the evening and tomorrow morning. The partridge made good eating, if a little on the small side.

### Day 9



That man is driving me barmy with his presents! Nine ladies arrived, all dressed up (and down!) and ready to dance waltzes, foxtrots, flamenco, and even the can-can! They all brought I-pods and other devices to play their music, and a couple brought male partners. What a racket! They made even more disturbance than yesterday's cows, milkmaids, and crowd.

I promptly sent the dancing girls off to audition for *Strictly Come Dancing*, but not before the noise abatement people turned up again. The RSPCA came to remove the geese and the cows, and the police returned, accusing me of running a house of ill repute. Spent the afternoon clearing cow-pats from the lawn and filling in DEFRA forms.

### Day 10

Two limousines drew up and decanted ten lords wearing ridiculous mediaeval costumes, who promptly started leaping about like maniacs. The police, who now have a constant watch on my house, stormed in and accused me of supplying these supposedly sedate gents with uppers and other stimulants. The

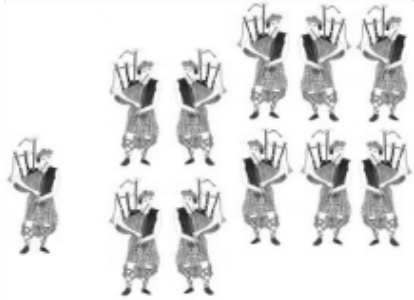


officers raided my house and garden, seriously damaging the dove-cot in the process. Having found no drugs, they sped up to London and searched the House of Lords, where they ripped apart the Woolsack. Another court case looms. I sent the lords off to join the ladies and milkmaids to audition for *Strictly Come Dancing*, so that they can leap to their hearts' content. The doves disappeared when the police disturbed them. I'd rather have kept the limousines, but they disappeared as well, the chauffeurs driving off pretty sharpish when the police waded in.

### Day 11

This man must be mad! Today he send me eleven pipers, who immediately brought the police and noise abatement officers to my

door again! I sent the pipers off to the shopping mall, to entertain the shoppers. The police then hauled me off to court, where I was served with an ASBO for persistently failing to comply with noise abatement requirements, and told to return next month to face other charges. Came home and switched on the news, only to hear that *Strictly Come Dancing* has experienced serious audition problems and all the milkmaids have been disqualified.



### Day 12

I have just about had it with that man! Twelve drummers arrived today, quickly followed by police and noise abatement officers (again!). They ordered the drummers to cease drumming and leave the premises. All twelve then marched off to the shopping mall to drum up people for the new year sales. The police served me with a warrant for failing to comply with an ASBO, and gave me a number of other



documents to complete before my next court appearance. I slammed the door in their faces, and turned on the TV, only to see a local news report about pipers and drummers fighting over sales bargains in the local shopping mall. I've never been so glad to get Twelfth Night over!

### Later in January

A heavy frost has blighted the pear tree. The damaged dove-cot is now full of feral pigeons that look like providing a lifetime supply of guano. The French hens have gone on strike, so I have no eggs. The swans have joined the geese and cows at the local RSPCA centre, where they are proving a great attraction. The blackbirds have flown, and I've advertised half a ton of bird seed on ebay, so far with no bids. The pond is covered in algae, and stinks. I've pawned my remaining two gold rings to pay various fines, and the garden's a mess as the gardener is still off sick. The milk-maids signed on at the local JobCentre, as did the few pipers and drummers who are still free. *Strictly Come Dancing* has been cancelled for the coming year, after a fight between lords and ladies as to who should partner whom. There is to be a public enquiry about the raid on the House of Lords and the destruction of the

Woolsack. My ASBO still has 26 days to run, I face two court cases, and the neighbours won't talk to me. So much for the gifts of true love.

**Glossary for non-UK readers**

**ASBO:** Anti-Social Behaviour Order, a penalty issued by the criminal courts, often accompanied by electronic tagging and a curfew. Offenders are required to desist from the activities complained of, which may include drunkenness, fighting, disturbing the peace, and noise nuisance.

**DEFRA:** Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, government department responsible for food production and standards, agriculture and fisheries, environmental issues and rural communities.

**Noise Abatement Officers:** Local authority officers who monitor cases of unacceptable noise, whether from machinery, music, vehicles or animals. Officers have the power to issue compulsory notices to abate the noise which, if ignored, may result in the confiscation of whatever has caused the noise.

**Quota:** A limit on national milk production imposed by the European Community. Each governments allocates amounts within the overall quota. Farmers are restricted to the amount stated on their quota documents, and are penalised with a levy if they produce more.

**RSPCA:** Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the major national charity dealing with the welfare of pets, livestock and wildlife.

**Strictly Come Dancing:** TV programme in which celebrities are teamed with professional dancers in a competition lasting several weeks, to determine who is the best celebrity dancer.

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## *Reunion & AGM Booking Form*

**I/we will be attending the 2012 Reunion & AGM in Tiverton.**

No of adults: . . . . . No of children . . . . .

**I/we will be bringing display items/entering competitions.**

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

**I/we regret we will not be attending the 2012 Reunion & AGM.**

**I/we intend to register absentee votes at the 2012 AGM.**

**I/we will be sending competition entry item(s).**

Name(s) . . . . .

Address . . . . .

. . . . .

*Please delete items not applicable, and return to Hon President (see pp 39 & 42).*