

Witheridge Family History Society

Newsletter No. 4.

Dear Friends,

I am not going to bore you with commencing this letter with an apology for not getting it to you before Easter as was aimed at – if I did, you would be within your rights to respond with “not again!!!” Do hope you all are keeping well and have had plenty of opportunity to enjoy special days and events in your part of the world.

Of necessity, some of this Newsletter will be dealing with matters around the forthcoming A.G.M. to be held in **Salisbury on 16th May** . Such a shame that the majority of you are not able to attend, but my thanks to a number of you who have already sent messages for me to relay to those who will be with us. But more about the AGM later, let's bring you up-to-date with the news.

1. **SHEILA & TOM JEWELL. (#187)**

Thank you Sheila for getting in touch some time ago, telling me of the extremely serious health problems being experienced, particularly by Tom who has to attend hospital three times a week for kidney dialysis. Each session was taking four hours. Also, their eldest son, Ian, was awaiting heart surgery - do let me know how things are Sheila. If you let me have your phone number, I will be pleased to give you a ring from time to time. The health concerns have been balanced a little by the wonderful wedding day of their granddaughter, Danielle. The marriage took place at the Sandy Bay Hotel in Combe Martin. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to visit Combe Martin will know of the stunning views from this cliff top hotel. A beautiful day in an amazing venue. Also, Sheila and Tom now have another great grandchild, Elizabeth Jewell who has joined her brother William (3) and are the children of their eldest grandson. It is good to hear of young “Witheridges” coming on the scene. Those of you who are fortunate enough to have grandchildren, or maybe even great grandchildren, how about a photo or two for future newsletters?

2. **JULIA CROCKER (#193)**

You may remember that in Newsletter 1 (July 2014) I did a profile on Julia who lives in Orkney. I mentioned in that profile that Julia was planning to retire and come South to be closer to her children. Julia recently wrote to me to say that she is hopeful that she has a potential buyer for her home. We do hope that the sale will go ahead Julia and that your plans to move permanently to Warminster will be realised. Julia also sent her apologies that she is unable to attend the AGM because on 16th May she will be in Australia, attending the wedding of one of her sons. Presumably he is marrying an Ozzie girl!! Another lovely venue for a wedding, hope the weather is good and do let us have some pictures on your return.

3. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA.

I received the following message from Jennifer Woolcott (#260):

*"It is with sorrow that I inform you of the recent death of **Mary Staples (nee Witheridge)**, wife of Tom Staples and mother of our Australian Members: Michelle Denison, Kerrilyn Meyer and Robert Staples. Mary was the daughter of Philemon Witheridge and Catherine (nee McDonald) late of Greenwell Point, New South Wales, Australia. Our sympathies have been extended to Tom, Michelle, Kerrilyn, Robert and their families".*

After writing to Robert Staples (#262) expressing the sympathy of us all, I received further details from Rob, which I am passing on to you.

"Mum passed away at 6pm last Tuesday 7 April - just two days after her 86th birthday We had a lovely service at the Greenwell Point Church where Mum was Christened all those years ago. After the church service the cortege took Mum for a final drive around Greenwell Point - we drove past the house site where Mum was born and raised and paused there for a moment. There is a brand new house on the site now - however we were overjoyed that the new owners had decided to keep the original steps to the old house as a feature in their front garden. We have photographs of Mum's parents (Philemon and Catherine), Mum and Dad sitting on those steps. Dad placed two yellow roses on the steps in remembrance (Yellow Roses were Mum's favourites). Then we proceeded to the Shoalhaven Crematorium for the Committal and a beautiful poem written by my daughter Gillian. Mum and Dad have planned to have their ashes scattered when the time comes on the Crookhaven River at the site of the old family wharf at Greenwell Point"

3a. I was also delighted to receive the following report from Jennifer of the latest Australian Witheridge Reunion:

**Witheridge Family Reunion River Cruise
Nowra - Greenwell Point, New South Wales, Australia.
29th March, 2015.
Report by Organiser, Jennifer Woolcott (nee Witheridge),
and Australian Representative WFHS**

This year descendants of Philemon (b 1844) and Mary Witheridge (nee Carvarth) who had migrated from Cornwall and settled at Greenwell Point, New South Wales, Australia in the late 1870's, gathered at Nowra Public Wharf for our annual reunion: a River Cruise.

Greenwell Point is close to the mouth of the Crookhaven River. Nowra, the business centre for the area, and Terara are on the Shoalhaven River, the mouth of which is close to the sea. Access to the Pacific Ocean is via a canal which was manually dug between the Shoalhaven and Crookhaven Rivers in the early days of European settlement so that coastal shipping could access markets, bringing supplies and taking produce back to Sydney.

Family members present this year included descendants of three of Philemon and Mary's sons: Philemon (b 1883), Joseph (b 1888) and William (b 1889). Philemon married Catherine McDonald and raised their family in the Greenwell Point area. Today their descendants, Kerrilyn Meyer, Karlene Hosking (and her husband, Craig), and Robert Staples were present at the reunion.

Joseph married Ada (nee Innes), sister of Rose who married Joseph's brother, William. (Two brothers married two sisters.) Joseph and Ada had two boys, Joe and John, and lived at Bateman's Bay further south where they fished the Clyde River. Ada and Rose's father had oyster leases on the Clyde and when their sister died leaving a young baby, Ileen, Ada and Rose reared her. We are pleased that Ileen and her husband, Dave Gordon Smith, come to our reunion every year. John was

able to join us again this year but it was unfortunate that his wife, Hansa became ill and was unable to attend.

In the latter half of the 1920's William (my grandfather) and his wife (Rose nee Innes) moved their family up the Shoalhaven River to Terara which was the original site for the settlement of Nowra. (Two huge floods in 10 years during the late 1800's had washed away much of the township and Nowra, the regional centre for the area, was settled a few kilometres upstream where it is situated to this day.) Today Terara, protected by flood mitigation work, with its small village-like appearance is set in lush dairy farm countryside and is much sought-after for its real estate which, in the rare case that land comes up for sale, is very expensive. William's youngest son, Philemon (Toby), and his wife, Beverly, still live in the home they built on the site of the old tennis court which was part of "Fairview", the original Witheridge home of my grandparents, William and Rose, and their children: my late father, William (b 1921), Tom (b 1944, deceased), Allan (b 1926), Jack (b 1928, deceased), Philemon (known as Toby, b 1940) and Alma (b 1946). Grandfather was a fisherman earning his living from the bounty of the river.

Once aboard the boat we departed on a very enjoyable journey. We couldn't have ordered a better day weather-wise if we'd been able to. It was a glorious warm autumn day. Clear blues skies with some high wisps of white cloud and barely a hint of a breeze meant that reflections in the water added to the beauty of the river. Conversations flowed as we caught up on family news, became reacquainted or met relatives who, until then we'd only spoken of and not necessarily to. We left the wharf heading downstream. Many of us who have fond memories of life on the river remembered boating and fishing activities being woven into our way of life. Swimming in the river was discouraged or in the case of my brother (Geoffrey) and I, forbidden, because of the danger of sharks which had been caught in fishing nets from time to time. In earlier days there had been designated swimming areas netted off for safety.

We were very fortunate that Allan and Toby were able to relate stories of days gone by when the family depended on the river for their livelihood, pointing out the "good" fishing spots, sites of interest, answering our questions and so adding to what was developing into an already memorable day.

The boat proceeded down the Shoalhaven River via the Terara Channel to the canal and into the Crookhaven River. We soon approached Greenwell Point where the original Philemon owned a substantial area of land and his son, Philemon and wife Catherine, later brought up their family. As there is no wharf for public access we only stopped long enough to take on board a fish 'n chip box for each of us. The boat turned around and headed for "home". In the quietness that ensued as the delicious fish 'n chips were being consumed Jennifer was able to quickly welcome everyone expressing thanks to all for coming. Special thanks were conveyed to Toby and Bev for their original suggestion re the venue, Allan and Toby for their informative contributions to the day and Alma for once again providing one of her delicious fruit cakes appropriately decorated for the occasion. Congratulations were extended to William (son of Geoffrey and Lyn Witheridge) for being selected to take up a position with the OECD in Paris, beginning in August.

Attendance and Apologies Sheets were circulated along with a Suggestion Sheet for ideas for future outings. We completed the "formal" part of the day with the cutting of the cake by William and Rose Witheridge's three surviving children: Allan, Toby and Alma Templeman (nee Witheridge).

As the boat glided through the calm waters back to Nowra Wharf (all too quickly it seemed) conversations and camaraderie continued until we disembarked for a group photo before dispersing for another year.

The tallies for the day were:

- Numbers present: 35,
- Number of Apologies: 24
- Suggestions for Future Events: 4

One of our main objectives in planning this day was to try appeal to the younger generation of our family. The stories and culture of our family will only survive if the next generation is prepared to take them on board, keep the stories and eventually share them with generations to come. In this I feel we have succeeded this year.



Back Row: Paul Middleton, Rodney Templeman, Judith Witheridge, Jack Day, Daniel Tibbits, Neil Witheridge, Rowena Tibbits (obscured), Phillip Witheridge, Grieg Witheridge, John Witheridge, Beverley & Toby (Philemon) Witheridge, Alma Templeman, Richard & Jennifer Woolcott.

Centre Row: Rachel Middleton, William Witheridge, Eric Witheridge, Geoffrey and Lyn Witheridge, Dave Gordon-Smith, Katherine Day, Karen Witheridge, Rowena Witheridge, Karlene Hosking,

Front Row: Allan Witheridge, Ileen Gordon-Smith, Margaret Witheridge, Darcy Middleton, Jake Middleton, Georgia Tibbits, Katie Tibbits, Kerrilyn Meyer, Robert Staples, Craig Hosking.



Approach to Greenwell Point



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1. Alma, Allan and Toby
2. Daniel Tibbets and Rachel Middleton
3. Margaret, Bev, and Judith - all "Mrs Witheridges".
4. Richard Woolcott and John Witheridge
5. Jack & Katie Day (nee Witheridge), Phillip Witheridge, Neil & Rowena Witheridge.
6. Jennifer Woolcott (nee Witheridge), John Witheridge.
7. Grandchildren of Jennifer & Richard: (L to R) Jake & Darcy Middleton, Georgia & Katie Tibbits.
8. Robert Staples, Allan Witheridge, John Witheridge, Toby Witheridge

Thanks Jennifer, and well done. It looks as though everyone really enjoyed the day. I am asking Bill Dwyne (web-master) to put some of them into the picture gallery of the web-site, but for the sake of those of you who don't have access to the same, I have reduced them down to a size which enables me to get them on one page.

In case, like myself, you wondered what the initials **OECD** in paragraph 8 of Jennifer's report, stand for, I am informed they are short for 'Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development "- A group of 30 member countries that discuss and develop economic and social policy. **OECD** countries are democratic countries that support free market economies.

3b. CORRECTION.

I inadvertently gave you the wrong e-mail address for Judith and Allan Witheridge (#165). This should read jiwitherid@hotmail.com Sorry about that Judith. Despite both Allan and Judith struggling against serious health difficulties, Judith continues to keep in regular touch with my sister Angela, who as you may remember has had to move into residential care in Australia. I know that Angela appreciates the contact and was extremely sorry that she was unable to join them on the recent cruise. I am most grateful to everyone over there who keeps an eye on how Angela is.

3c. FINAL BIT OF AUSTRALIAN "NEWS"

Those of you who have access to "You Tube" on your computer may like to follow through the following e-mail I received some weeks ago from Robert Staples:

"Dear Witheridge family descendents,

Below is a Youtube link to a presentation put together by a cousin Ian Witheridge. He and his son will be at the Gallipoli Dawn service this year to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. He has been researching one of my/our Grand Uncles (ie my Grandfather Philemon Witheridge's brothers) Thomas Witheridge who was killed in WW1 in France and his brother Robert who was seriously wounded. This is only part of the journey but a fascinating and poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by members of our family. The presentation includes a number of family photos that I acquired and also some of the visit that Cathy and I had in April 2009 to the Warlencourt Cemetery near Bapaume where we located Thomas' grave. Have a look at this when you get a quiet moment to reflect. It runs for 10 mins and 2 seconds."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErkKOLiDxF0&feature=youtube> (copy into your browser)

With best wishes to all from Rob and Cathy Staples

4. NEW ZEALAND

Unfortunately, **Velma Metcalfe**, our New Zealand representative, has found it necessary to resign her membership of the Society. Velma and her husband are planning to enjoy "a new life in the Hawkes Bay region and have found a retirement complex in the small village of Havelock North". Although the membership in New Zealand is extremely small, Velma's support and encouragement will be greatly

missed. I have pointed out that if she gets bored with retirement, there is always an opportunity to resume contact with her Witheridge family. Meanwhile, we wish Velma and Rodney all the very best for the future.

5. The 1939 Register.

I was recently on duty at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. Although this information may only be of interest to UK members and perhaps those still researching family members who may still be alive, I thought I would pass on the news that we were given by the Family History Group, "Find My Past", concerning the 1939 Register that the government have given permission to be made available to the public **later this year**. The 1939 register was taken on 29 September 1939 by the British Government, shortly after the outbreak of WW2. It recorded personal details of individuals in order to issue identity cards and ration books, and later formed the basis of the National Health Service's records. Since the 1931 census was destroyed, and there was none taken in 1941, the 1939 Register provides an invaluable 'census substitute' for historians of the more recent past. This fantastic resource will open up entirely new avenues for genealogical research. I will let you know when the Register is actually available.

6. UK AGM.

This event, as you know will take place in the **SP2 Community building in Salisbury, Wiltshire on Saturday 16th May, 2015**. The venue is close to Salisbury Cathedral, which, as you may know, holds one of the only four surviving copies of the 1215 Magna Carta. In March of this year, a permanent exhibition entitled, "**Magna Carta, Spirit of Justice, Power of Words.**" was opened in the Cathedral. Some of us attending the AGM are planning to go down the day before, in order that we can have a chance to view the exhibition. It would be good if you found it possible to join us for the weekend. The Officers of the Society will be holding their meeting in the morning, followed by a buffet lunch at 12.30 and the AGM at 2 p.m. All members are welcome to join us for the buffet lunch and of course to stay for the AGM. In the evening (6.30) we are having a meal together at "**The Cloisters**" in Catherine Street, Salisbury. If you plan to join us for any part of the day, please do contact me as soon as you can in order that I can give the numbers attending, to the caterers. I can also let you have details regarding travel, possible accommodation, parking etc.

Those who receive your Newsletter by e-mail, will have the AGM documents sent to you separately. If you receive your Newsletter by snail mail, then the Agenda and voting slips will be included in the same package. The Absentee Voting slips should be returned to me as speedily as possible, together with apology for absence and any messages to be conveyed to the meeting. The Voting slips are confidential and how you vote will not be revealed. (I remove your name and membership number from the slip before I give it to the Chair at the AGM). May I remind you that if you have not yet paid your subscription by the date of the AGM, your vote will not be counted.

As well as returning your vote to me, please submit any point you would like to raise under "Any Other Business", or indeed any point being discussed at the AGM. All comments/criticisms are valid and again, if you prefer, I will not reveal your name in the Minutes. The Minutes of the 2014 AGM were sent to you in June of last year, but if you cannot find yours and wish me to, I will send you a further copy. Following the 2015 AGM I will send you the Minutes as soon as possible.

Meantime, take care and do keep in touch.

Beth (Neilly) (#253)

Secretary WFHS.

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