



# *W*itheridge

## Family History Society

Spring - Summer 2019

<b>Family News</b>	page 2
<b>A tribute to Richard Henry Witheridge</b>	page 4
<b>A tribute to Judith Isobel Witheridge</b>	page 6
<b>Impressions of Witheridge Weekend (1997): A poem by Judith Witheridge</b>	page 8
<b>Memories of the 1997 Reunion</b>	page 10
<b>2019 Reunion Report</b>	page 14
<b>2019 Annual General Meeting Minutes</b>	page 16
<b>Article: Mayflower 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – The Families They Left Behind</b>	page 19

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# Family News

## Busy times in Berridale

It's been a busy southern-hemisphere winter for Rob & Cathy Staples in Berridale, New South Wales. Rob writes that the weather there has been cold, but very dry, and farmers have been desperate for rain. Cathy has been away working further west, about 8 hours drive from their home, but has now finished her away stint. Meanwhile, Rob's been working hard on the large greenhouse he's building. He's nearly finished, and they're all happy with how it looks. Spring officially started on 1 September, although there's still frost about, so they'll be glad to have the greenhouse up and running in time to house spring-sown seedlings.

A couple of weeks ago Rob injured his back while cutting firewood but, thanks to the skills of a chiropractor, he recovered very quickly. He and Cathy are looking forward to baby-sitting their two granddaughters for a few days, before hosting friends from Canada. In November, Rob flies off to Tasmania for the Word Fly Fishing Championship. Five years ago, these Championships were held in Devon, England, so Rob had a great opportunity to join us for our Witheridge Day in Devizes and talk about his ancestor Philemon Witheridge, who emigrated from Cornwall. This year's journey will be considerably shorter, but we wish Rob and his team all every success.

## Touring the UK

On 4 May, Jennifer and Richard Woolcott arrived at Heathrow for the start of a trip to explore the UK, taking in our Witheridge Day on their travels.

When planning their trip, they enquired about RAF Biggin Hill, as they were keen to visit. At the time, they had no idea exactly where it was, or that Roy and Kim Cook live just a few minutes from there! Richard, a qualified pilot, had been trained by pilots who had themselves been trained at RAF Biggin Hill, so had heard of its special place in the history of WWII and was keen to visit the area. Realising that they could combine Witheridge Day with a visit to the RAF Memorial Chapel and the new Battle of Britain Museum, they organised their travels accordingly.



Their first journey took them westward, first to Salisbury, and then further into the west country, seeking out places with ancestral connections on their journey. A week later it was time to head to Biggin Hill, to stay with Roy and Kim, arriving in time to catch Kim decorating the Witheridge birthday cake.

Saturday was a busy time, meeting other members, taking in the AGM, and examining the family history displays. During the afternoon Richard and Jennifer were asked to cut the birthday cake, and later we all set off for a meal at The Crown in the nearby hamlet of Leaves Green.

On Sunday Roy and Kim took Richard and Jennifer for their promised tour of the new museum and then the Memorial Chapel, which lists the names of all 453 aircrew from around the world and based in Biggin Hill Sector, who lost their lives in WW2. Later, Roy, Kim, Richard and Jennifer all enjoyed a delightful meal in another old pub, The Old Ship in Tatsfield.

# Family News

The next stage of their journey took Richard and Jennifer to London, and then Windsor, before heading north to Yorkshire, and then across the Irish Sea to tour Ireland.

Jennifer had planned to write an account of their time in the UK but, sadly, events overtook them. Shortly after their return to Australia, Jennifer's mother, Margaret Witheridge, age 93, fell and broke both her hip and her shoulder. These injuries, combined with other medical issues, meant that only palliative care was possible, so Jennifer spent a large part of each day and evening with her mother. Sadly, Margaret died on 3 August. In some ways this was a relief for her children, who had seen how much she suffered from the dreadful injuries sustained in her fall. We send our condolences to all Margaret's family.

Since then, there has been much for Jennifer to deal with, but we're hoping that, when time is available, Jennifer will be able to write about her travels in the UK. Meanwhile, she has managed to send some photos of our Witheridge Weekend, which feature in our report on the AGM and Reunion.

## Condolences

Sadly, this summer has been one of many bereavements within our Witheridge families, and we send our condolences to all who are grieving.

**Richard Witheridge**, one of our founder members, who had held many offices in WFHS over the years, died in Bristol on 28 March 2019. We send our love and condolences to his widow Maureen, children Ann, Mark and Susan, and all the wider family. A tribute to Richard is on page 4.

**Judith Witheridge**, mother of Greig, Neil, Ian and Paul, and for many years the WFHS Australia representative, died in Port Kembla Hospital in New South Wales on 12 May 2019. We send our love and condolences to Judith's family. A tribute to Judith is on page 6.

## A sad summer

This summer has been particularly difficult for Liz Davey and her family. In June, Liz's 82-year-old mother Grace Barr (daughter of Kate Witheridge) had open heart surgery to repair a long-time leaking mitral valve, and Liz spent many exhausting hours travelling to the West Country to spend time with her mother. Just a month later, on 15 July, Liz's sister Alex lost her battle against cancer at the young age of 59. Neither Grace, nor Liz's father, ever expected to live longer than one of their children, so they are understandably devastated, with Grace's recovery from surgery inevitably being affected. We send our love and condolences to Liz and her family on the loss of Alex.

Kim Cook

# Richard Henry Witheridge

## 1935-2019

Richard Henry Witheridge was born in Ermington, Devon, on 7 September 1935, the third child of Henry Witheridge and Alice E Jenkins. Their first child, Alice, had died soon after her birth in 1932, but in 1934 their first son, Philip Richard, was born. Sadly, their mother Alice died in 1936, at the tender age of 34, when Richard was barely a year old.

Richard was sent to live with his grandmother, Rhoda Witheridge (née Mumford), where he regarded his cousin Beryl as a sister. Their home in Ermington was warm and welcoming, and his grandmother was a positive, quiet influence.

After some years he went back to join his father and step-mother Lilian at their home in South Brent, where he was reunited with his brother Philip, and gained a step-brother Trevor and a half-brother Stuart.

From the age of 10, Richard developed a keen interest in engines and all things mechanical, and was delighted to start his working life at Plymouth Dockyard as a trainee engine fitter. He did well and, when he received an award, replied 'I consider myself lucky to have achieved my ambition'.

In 1958 Richard moved to Bath, where he worked as a draughtsman at the Ministry of Defence. In his free time, he was a good dancer, and enjoyed going to local dances. It was at a dance at The Old Mill in Bathampton that he met Maureen Shaw. They married in 1960, settled down in Bath, and had three children, Ann, Mark and Susan.



When Richard and Maureen bought their own house, Richard's versatile practical skills came into full play. He rewired, replumbed, and successfully completed many d-i-y projects, without ever needing to call in a tradesman to do any work on the house. Among his achievements was single-handedly moving the wall of Mark's bedroom to give him more space, and then building from scratch a bed-frame, a desk, and a table for Mark's train set. Mark still doesn't know how he moved that wall! His children were amazed that Richard never got flustered, and always seemed to have a quiet confidence about how any problems should be tackled, whether it was dealing with the broken-down 12-ft family caravan at traffic lights in Cardiff, or building an S-shaped wall in Sue's garden. He was always willing to help others when he could.

Family was very important to Richard, and although he was a quiet man, his loving nature and pride in his family were always evident. He took an interest in everything his children did, and in turn introduced them to many fascinating places. When his children were young, he often took them away in the family caravan, visiting family in Devon, or enjoying sunny beach holidays in Swanage, Dorset. On a visit to the Fleet Air Arm Museum, he showed his daughter Ann a model of HMS Invincible, and told her he'd designed the lift shafts on that ship. Ann had always thought that his lift designs were for passenger lifts, so was amazed to realise that he'd actually designed enormous lifts for aeroplanes and ammunition!

Gradually, the family's caravan holiday destinations went further, even to touring Scotland but, even though he was the only driver, he never complained about the amount of driving involved, in all weathers.

# Richard Henry Witheridge

## 1935-2019

Richard's time with his grandmother in Ermington had made him aware that his family had lived there for many generations, and tracing his family history became a huge hobby. On one occasion during a family holiday in Devon, Richard and Mark spent a few days of their holiday in a library, poring over indecipherable writing from the 17th century, looking for the name Witheridge. Mark didn't mind spending his holiday this way, because he just wanted to join in with whatever his Dad liked doing.

In 1987, Richard was contacted by Kim Cook, also researching her Witheridge ancestry, and he and Maureen came to the inaugural meeting of the Witheridge FHS in West Wickham, Kent. The valuable research that Richard had already done was added to research done by the late Joyce Browne, and Kim Cook, and this compilation of research formed the basis of our ever-extending database, to which Richard continued to contribute.

At that first WFHS meeting in 1987, little did Richard and Maureen know that they would be involved for over 30 years! Richard was voted on to the Committee at that very first meeting and over the years held the posts of Research Co-ordinator, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, and Editor, as well as organising a number of our reunions, drawing together Witheridge descendants from around the world. At various times he was joined on the Committee by Maureen, Mark and Susan. His quiet calm and easy-going manner ensured that, even when there were strong, differing opinions, nothing ever became heated. At our 2013 AGM, in recognition of his enormous contribution to the Society, Richard was unanimously elected as an Hon Life Vice-President of WFHS.

In their retirement years, Richard and Maureen enjoyed travelling further afield, with Sorrento, Italy, a favourite spot, as well as delighting in their grandchildren, Sarah, Becky, Hannah, and James. He patiently allowed his granddaughters to play with his hair, tying it into bows. When the family played Balderdash and other word games, Richard was great at inventing fake meanings for rare words. He also ensured that all the family knew how to eat a cream tea the Devonshire way!

In recent years, Richard developed hearing difficulties and other health problems but, as always, made the best of everything. He loved watching the birds in their garden, following football matches on television, or doing the daily crossword with Maureen. In the final weeks, he was admitted to a nursing home nearby, where he continued to impress the staff with his warm smiles, his genuine gratitude for, and appreciation of, the care he was given.

Richard counted himself lucky to have such a caring and loving family around him to care for him as his health deteriorated, and gained a great deal of comfort from knowing that Maureen and the family were with him on that last day. He died peacefully on 6th March 2019.

Richard was a quiet, unassuming, and contented man, who could also be quick-witted and funny. He never drew attention to himself, but enjoyed the simple pleasures of life, never grumbling or complaining, but always, in his own words, ready to 'take life as it comes'. He probably never realised what a profound influence he had on so many people, whether family, work colleagues, WFHS, or the people he met when he and Maureen were on their travels. Richard was very special to his family, and to those of us in WFHS who came to know him so well, and will be greatly missed.

*These reflections on Richard's life were compiled from those written by his family, supplemented by additional Witheridge FHS information.*



# Judith Isobel Witheridge

## 1934-2019

Judith Isobel Witheridge (née Rolfe) was born in Nowra, New South Wales, in 1934. Judith grew up in Nowra, a short distance further down the Shoalhaven River from Terara, where Allan Witheridge was living. They met at Nowra Methodist Church after Allan returned from time at the Shell Oil Company in Papua New Guinea, following WW2.

Judith and Allan married in 1954 and, soon after, Allan was assigned by Shell to a fuel depot in Mudgee, a small rural town in country NSW. They enjoyed the social life centred around the Mudgee Methodist Church, and during their time in Mudgee (1955-1962) their three elder sons were born – Greig in 1956, Neil in 1958, and Ian in 1961.

The family then moved to coastal Wollongong, NSW, when Allan was stationed at Shell's Port Kembla fuel depot. Here their fourth son, Paul, was born in 1964. Judith's family life was her top priority, followed closely by her Church life. Once Paul started school, Judith went back to work, initially teaching scripture at Figtree Primary School, and Sunday school Unanderra Methodist Church, which fitted well around family life.

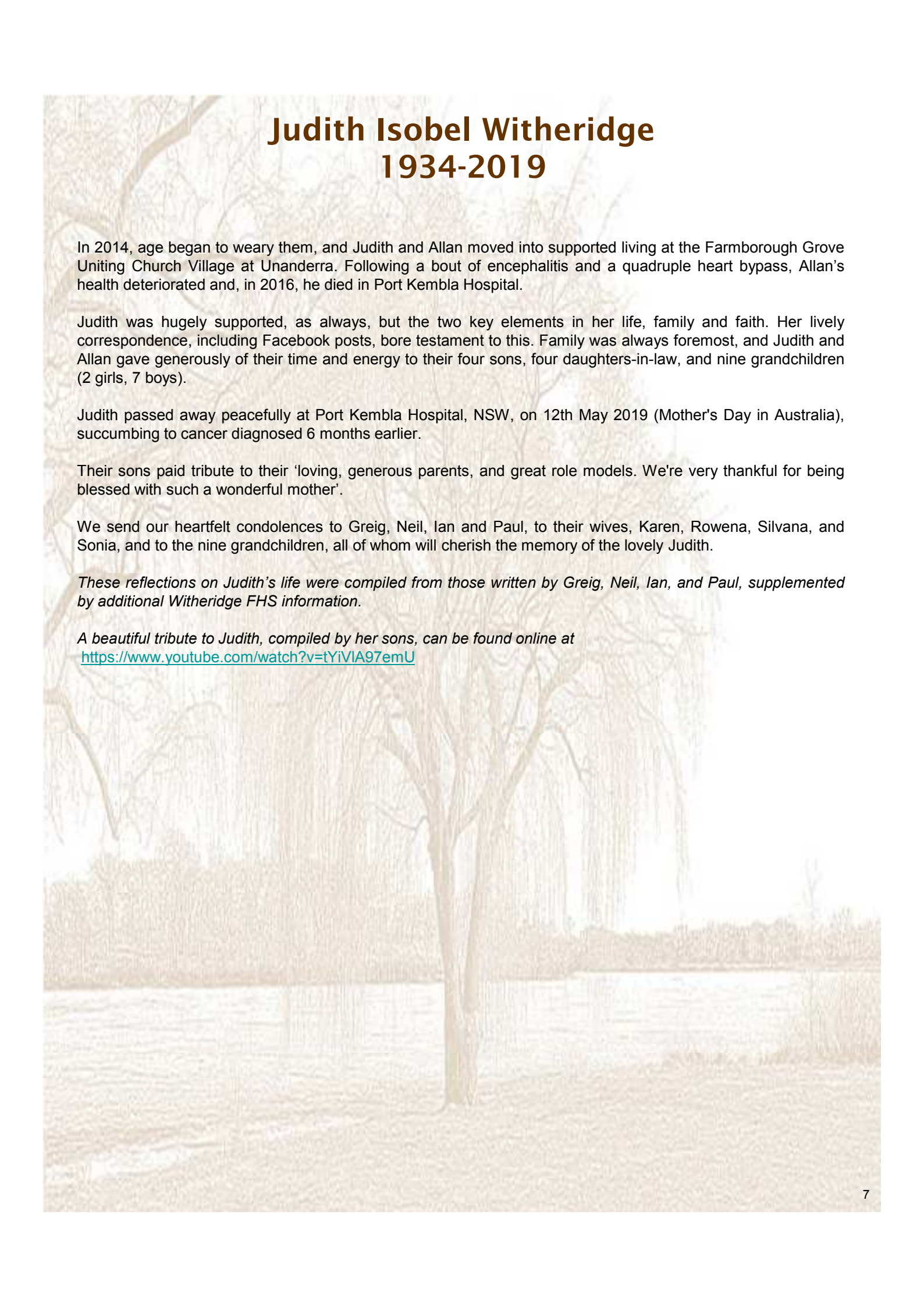
Judith was a natural teacher, and the priest she covered for as a scripture teacher when he wasn't available, offered her a part-time position at St John Vianney's Primary School in Fairy Meadow, a suburb of Wollongong. From 1970 to 1981, Judith was also a part-time student at the Australian Catholic University, in order to obtain a full-time job at St John Vianney's.

Judith retired in 1990 and, following Allan's retirement in 1995, they were able to indulge their love of travel. In 1997 they joined the Witheridge FHS, and came to England, travelling around the west country to the places where Allan's family had lived, and taking in the WFHS 10th Anniversary Reunion in Tiverton. They greatly enjoyed this trip, and Judith wrote a poem about the Reunion which was published in The Witheridge Times that year.



At that 10th Anniversary gathering, Judith and Allan met up with Dorothy Witheridge, widow of Allan's cousin Michael, and their son Tony. For many years Dorothy had been the Australian Representative of the Witheridge FHS, and when she stood down from the post in 2006, Judith and Allan took over the role. They continued Dorothy's custom of organising Witheridge picnics, and during the following years these grew to become great Witheridge gatherings, regularly reported in The Witheridge Times and WFHS Newsletters. Every year dozens of Witheridges enjoyed this lively event, which included a Witheridge cake, traditional at our reunions in England.

Judith was gregarious, intelligent, and likeable, and was also a great letter-writer. We loved reading her lively and informative letters about their family, their travels, and the many things they enjoyed during their retirement.



# Judith Isobel Witheridge

## 1934-2019

In 2014, age began to weary them, and Judith and Allan moved into supported living at the Farmborough Grove Uniting Church Village at Unanderra. Following a bout of encephalitis and a quadruple heart bypass, Allan's health deteriorated and, in 2016, he died in Port Kembla Hospital.

Judith was hugely supported, as always, but the two key elements in her life, family and faith. Her lively correspondence, including Facebook posts, bore testament to this. Family was always foremost, and Judith and Allan gave generously of their time and energy to their four sons, four daughters-in-law, and nine grandchildren (2 girls, 7 boys).

Judith passed away peacefully at Port Kembla Hospital, NSW, on 12th May 2019 (Mother's Day in Australia), succumbing to cancer diagnosed 6 months earlier.

Their sons paid tribute to their 'loving, generous parents, and great role models. We're very thankful for being blessed with such a wonderful mother'.

We send our heartfelt condolences to Greig, Neil, Ian and Paul, to their wives, Karen, Rowena, Silvana, and Sonia, and to the nine grandchildren, all of whom will cherish the memory of the lovely Judith.

*These reflections on Judith's life were compiled from those written by Greig, Neil, Ian, and Paul, supplemented by additional Witheridge FHS information.*

*A beautiful tribute to Judith, compiled by her sons, can be found online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYiVIA97emU>*

# Impressions of Witheridge Weekend (1997)

A poem by Judith Witheridge

I'm Judith, wife of Allan, of the Combe Martin descent,  
We're from 'Oz' (with Dot and Tony), and I'm writing  
what it meant

To be at the occasion to celebrate the ten-year mark.  
I volunteered to do this - here it is, in verse - so hark!

We missed the AGM  
Which elected Graham (again),  
Plus Kim, David, John and Rich.  
We heard it went without a hitch.  
Most there knew each other well –  
They were family we could tell.  
They welcomed us with smiles.  
It was worth those many miles!

Tom Jewell gave a witty talk  
And took us on a verbal walk.  
Put our history on projector,  
We enjoyed that visual lecture.  
It was great for us to meet  
In Tiverton's large Topaz suite  
And the breakfasts and the dinners  
(With desserts) were truly winners.

Next day the plan: around North Devon  
Sunday May 4th, '97.  
That's the day we did the tour.  
Colin made us feel secure  
(Did white knuckles and loud gasps  
sometimes come from girls and chaps?)  
Tom was at his best again,  
Told of Bronze, Iron or Saxon.

Hamlet, village farm and town,  
We saw them all from up and down.  
Sea and fields, and cliffs and hills,  
Hedgerows, gorse, and blue bluebells,  
Ancient oaks and bright green beeches,  
Blossom trees and farmland creatures,  
Fishing boats and cobbled streets,  
boggy marshes, windswept heaths ...  
(If there really is a drought,  
with all that green, we've cause to doubt.)  
Witheridge bell-ringers gave us sun,  
posed for photos for each one,  
Told about the coat-of-arms,  
wished us God-Speed, free from harms.

*Dot and Tony: Dorothy Witheridge and her son Tony.  
Dorothy was the WFHS Australia Representative at the  
time.*

*Witheridge FHS, was founded on 1 May 1989, as The  
Witheridge Society.*

*Graham Browne, re-elected Chairman;  
Kim Cook, Hon Life President (elected 1993,  
presented with certificate); Rev David E Witheridge,  
elected Hon Life Vice-President 1996; John  
Witheridge, elected Secretary and Membership  
Secretary; Richard Witheridge, elected Treasurer and  
Research Co-ordinator.*

*Tom and his wife Sheila were regular WFHS  
researchers, and produced some important Witheridge  
facts and documents during his excellent presentation.*

*WFHS had hired the hotel's Topaz Suite for all our  
functions.*

*The coach tour, planned by Richard Witheridge, was  
accompanied by his extensive research notes on  
places en route. Colin was the coach driver.*

*The weather was warm and sunny, with scattered  
showers, but there had been little rain during early  
spring. A few weeks later a major heat-wave started!*

*'Bell-ringers' were the Town Crier and his lady, in their  
traditional robes.*



# Impressions of Witheridge Weekend (1997)

A poem by Judith Witheridge

Next Combe Martin. What a view,  
Perched above the sea grey-blue!  
Reverend Wyer gave us much  
Info on the church - then lunch.  
At Ilfracombe we see, at most,  
Dimly, far-off Wales' coast.  
It's where Witheridges had land,  
And we all felt rather grand.

Berrynarbor and Northam  
Showed their churches when we came.  
Then Bradworthy, and the well  
Where once Witheridges did dwell.  
And it nearly claimed one's cap  
When the wind blew round the chap!  
There, a tea lady's Tea Room  
Saw a sudden business boom,  
But as quickly as it came,  
It went - Such a shame!

Westward Ho! Its pebble ridge,  
Viewed by all from hilltop bridge.  
Oh, I could go on and on;  
Crediton is 'Kyrton'  
(English is a language strange.  
Words spelled one way often change)

And the scandals from way back!  
Brawls, lawsuits and scallywag Jack!  
How the Pack o' Cards Hotel,  
The Leys and our past meld  
And there are triplets on our tree!  
Wonder who the next will be?

Now before I stop, I'll say  
How we folk from far away,  
From the US and NZ  
And from Canada have said  
That we are blessed to be a part  
Of a family whose heart  
Is with love and grace endowed  
And of whom we can be proud.  
Thank you, all our kith and kin  
whom we met - in Tiverton!

*Rev Wyer was the Vicar of the Parish Church, St Peter ad Vincula. A wonderful lunch was prepared for us in the Village Hall.*

*When the mining industry in north Devon declined, some Witheridge families crossed the Bristol Channel to become coal miners in Wales.*

*Berrynarbor was the original home of many of the north Devon Witheridges*

*Bradworthy Church, now dedicated to St John the Baptist, was originally dedicated to St Peter. A nearby spring gushes into a well, known as St Peter's Well. In 1997 it was partly hidden by a hedge, but was renovated by local volunteers in 2012.*

*Westward Ho! is the only English place-name that has an exclamation mark.*

*In some 17<sup>th</sup> century gazetteers Crediton is called Kerton/Kirton/Kyrton, but its Latin name was Cridiantun. It was a 'ton' (town) which stands on the banks of the River Creedy.*

*The Pack o' Cards in Combmartin was built c 1690 by squire George Ley, allegedly with money won playing cards. It was built on a plot 52 ft x 53 ft, had 4 floors, each with 13 doors and fireplaces, and 52 stairs. Now a hotel, it is Grade II\* listed. Records show many Witheridge-Ley marriages.*

*We all agreed it was a wonderful weekend, with great fun and many new friendships formed.*

## Memories of the 1997 Reunion

The minutes for the 1997 AGM show that 49 (+2 babies) attended the AGM, with 38 on the Reunion coach trip. Sadly, only apologies for absence were recorded in the published minutes, not the names of those who attended! Kim has tried to piece together the names (linked to ancestral groups) of those who attended any of the weekend's events, from various notes, photographs, and her own memories of this event, which was excellently organised by Richard Witheridge, ably assisted by his wife Maureen. Kim has also added details of the roles people held at the time. If anyone can correct any errors or omissions, please do so! We like to get things right!

The apologies for absence were from: Mrs Irene Birdsall, Mr Philip Witheridge, Brenda & Ron Dixon, Rod & Sue Witheridge, Adam & Anita Cook, Velma Metcalfe, Mr and Mrs Reg Popplestone, Miss Jane Witheridge, Mrs Mayda Witheridge, Mr and Mrs Larry Smith, Mrs Pat James, and Mrs Doreen Pedersen.

This is the pieced-together list of those who did attend.

### Berrynarbor & Ilfracombe Branch

Dorothy Witheridge (Australia Rep), from NSW, & son Tony Witheridge from Geneva, USA.

Allan & Judith Witheridge, from NSW, Australia.

John James, from Burnaby, BC, Canada.

Joan & Harry Payne, and daughter Jane, from Cheltenham, Glos.

### Bradworthy Branch (originated in Fremington, via Ilfracombe).

Paul Witheridge & Kathy (N America Rep), from Ontario, Canada.

Paul Freed, from Minneapolis, USA, sister Marcia Taylor & her daughter Lucy, from Wivenhoe, Essex.

### Combe Martin Branch (originated in Berrynarbor)

Rev David E Witheridge (Hon Vice-President), from Minneapolis, USA.

Jean Tomlinson, Dennis & Darlene Tomlinson, Michael & Jann Tomlinson & Patricia Johns(t)on, from Minneapolis, USA.

Betty Rossiter & daughter Jean Rossiter, from Bridgwater, Somerset.

Fenwick & Peggy Witheridge, from Newport, Wales.

Catherine Houtz, sister of Fenwick, from Florida, USA.



*Reunion group, Tiverton, 1997: It was a great pleasure to welcome so many overseas members, most of whom were joining us for the first time.*

*Reunion group, Tiverton, 1997: Rev David Witheridge of Minneapolis, our first Hon Life Vice-President, is seated far right. David held this post from 1996 until his death in December 2008.*

# Memories of the 1997 Reunion

## Ermington Branch

Joyce Brown (Editor) & Graham (Chairman), from Luton, Beds.  
Richard Witheridge (Treasurer & Research Co-ordinator) & Maureen, (from Bath, Soms).  
John Witheridge (Sec & Membership Sec), daughter Cheryl Young & 2 sons, from Gillingham, Kent.  
David Witheridge & June (Vice Chair), from Plympton, Devon.  
Brenda Dwyne, from Ontario, Canada.  
Joyce & Terry Stevens, from Corfe Mullen, Dorset.

## Kent & Birmingham Branch

Ena & Dr H Bissell, from Abergavenny, Wales.

## Wembury Branch

Kim Cook (Hon President) & Roy, from West Wickham, Kent.  
Jason & Zoe Cook, from Croydon, Surrey.  
Eve Witheridge, from Christchurch, New Zealand.

## Guests

Tom & Sheila Jewell (Witheridge researchers for WFHS), speakers, from Exeter, Devon.  
John Usmore, author of the History of Witheridge (town), speaker, from Witheridge.  
Doreen Heaton & Ann Potter (Northmore FHS), from Scotland. (Doreen later became a member.)  
Ernest Hamley, of the Hamley/Hamblin FHS.

After the AGM we gathered for lunch, which was followed by the traditional Witheridge cake. This had been made by Zoe Cook, and iced with a raised outline map of Devon (a very difficult shape to replicate), and the dates 1987 and 1997. Zoe's mother-in-law, Kim Cook, Honorary Life President, cut the cake. As this was the first opportunity to mark Kim's election in 1993 as Honorary Life President, she was then presented with a certificate to mark the appointment.



*Ermington descendants, Tiverton, 1997: Back row, L to R; John Witheridge with grandson, Brenda Dwyne, Terry Stephens, Richard Witheridge, and David Witheridge. (John, Richard and David, all cousins). Front row, L to R; Cheryl Young (John's daughter) with son, Graham Browne, Joyce Browne, Joyce Stephens (wife of Terry), Maureen Witheridge (wife of Richard), June Witheridge (wife of David).*

*The WFHS 10th Anniversary Cake, made by Zoe Cook, showing a raised outline map of Devon.*

## Memories of the 1997 Reunion

In recognition of his magnificent work in organising and preparing our weekend, with the help and encouragement of his wife Maureen, Richard Witheridge was presented with a beautiful needlework picture of a house in Ermington which was once the home of his ancestors. The picture had been skilfully worked by Joyce Browne.

The afternoon began with a lively question and answer session with Kim Cook and John Witheridge fielding the questions and supplying useful and fascinating information. The meeting broke up after tea, and we were sorry to see some of the visitors depart for home, sadly missing the coach trip planned for Sunday.

On Sunday, 38 people joined a coach tour, arranged by Richard, to explore many of the places associated with our Witheridge families. We left Tiverton at 9.00 am, with the first stop in Witheridge itself, in mid-Devon. Although Witheridge didn't become a surname until families had left this location, we're quite sure that this was the original home of our north Devon families. (The south Devon families took their name from the Manor of Witheridge in Plympton Hundred, which has long since disappeared, probably through coastal erosion.)

When we arrived in Witheridge, we were greeted by the Town Crier and his lady in their robes, who kindly agreed to pose with us for the traditional photo by the village sign. As there was a service in progress in the church, we explored the village, delighting in the souvenir shop in one of the two village squares, where we depleted the stock of postcards, notelets, poker-work, fridge magnets and the like!

Once the service had ended, we were able to make a quick tour of the church, before setting off for Combe Martin, where a superb welcome, organised by Una Parsons, herself a Witheridge descendant, awaited us in the Village Hall. After lunch we toured the church, with the Vicar, Mr Wyer, on hand to answer all our questions from his vast store of fascinating knowledge. So warm was the welcome, so delicious the lunch, and so informative the church visit, that we overstayed our allotted time slot. As we were preparing to leave, the press finally turned up, just in time to line us up for a group photo and take details for the local newspaper. Sadly, Kim's press-cutting has deteriorated so much it can't be reproduced here. Mr Wyer joined us for a very brief stop in neighbouring Berryarbor, before we set off for visits to Northam and Bradworthy.



*Some of the WFHS tour party, with the Witheridge Town Crier and his lady, at the Witheridge sign.*



*Church of St John the Baptist, Witheridge*

## Memories of the 1997 Reunion

At Northam we explored the church and its surroundings until our delayed tour guide arrived, and we were able to have a very brief look at some of the parish burial records.

Our final stop was Bradworthy, where we were greeted by Mr Collacott, who showed us around the village. Members of the Bradworthy branch were particularly delighted to find the old well still in place, and Lyle's Tenement, the 1851 home of 66-year-old John Witheridge, his wife Grace (née Grills), and their family, still standing. Most of us also paid a welcome visit to the local tea-shop, enjoying the delicious cakes on offer. Finally, after a wonderfully informative and stimulating day, it was time to scramble back on the coach, with many snoozing for all or part of the return journey to Tiverton!

The whole weekend was a tremendous success, thanks to Richard and Maureen. The recent deaths of Richard (see Tribute on page 4), and of Judith Witheridge (see Tribute on page 6), who wrote of the fun we had, prompted these memories. Sadly, they and many others who enjoyed that memorable weekend are no longer with us, but we hope their descendants, and our newer members, will enjoy reading of the events that have, in their turn, become part of our recent family history.



*Welcome board, hand-painted by Una Parsons, which greeted us at Combe Martin Village Hall.*

*Church of St Margaret of Antioch, Northam. The 170-ft tower was used to guide shipping in the Bristol Channel, with the seaward side often whitewashed to make it more easily seen by mariners.*

*Northam, looking seaward from St Margaret's Church.*

Note: All the photos accompanying this article were taken by Kim Cook. Although they were taken with a good camera, when she first scanned them, scanners were not of the quality and definition we have today, so apologies for the loss of quality. Many more photos were taken by individuals and for the WFHS archive, but we've lost track of who holds the official archive material now. If anyone can identify unnamed people in these photographs, that would be very helpful, and if there are any other photos of the event out there, please email our Secretary, Amy Kennedy.

**Kim Cook**

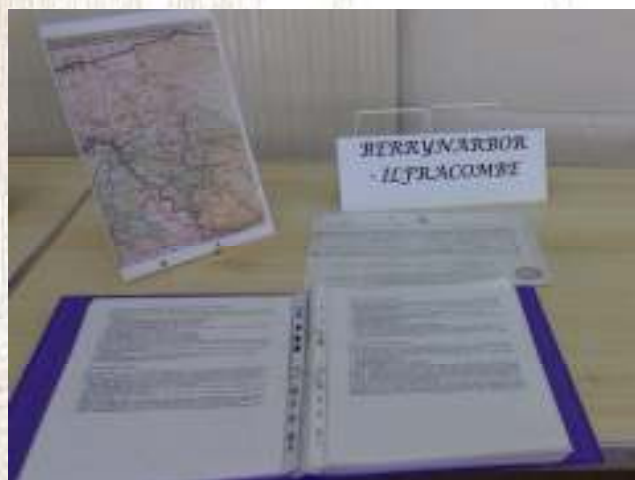
## 2019 Reunion Report

The 2019 WFHS Reunion was held after the AGM at the St Marks Centre, Biggin Hill on 11 May 2019.

In addition to members who had attended previous UK reunions, we were delighted to welcome our Australia Representatives, Jennifer and Richard Woolcott. Jennifer and Richard have attended many reunions in Australia, but this was their first in the UK. Sadly, it wasn't as well attended as the Australian ones, but this meant that we all had time to get to know them better. It was also good to welcome Philip Milnes-Smith, who'd not been able to join us in 2018, along with Jason, Roy, Kim, Amy, Liz and Chris.



As always there was a large amount of research material available and displays of the Witheridge/Wetherage pedigrees. Alongside the regular displays, Kim had prepared a new display for the Berrynarbor-Ilfracombe family, from which Jennifer is descended. This included an updated ENP (Enhanced Narrative Pedigree) for the many branches of this family, showing Jennifer's descent from Nicholas Witheridge and his wife Mary Somer, who had married in Berrynarbor on 9 October 1553. They were Jennifer's 11 x great-grandparents. Also on display was a copy of the 1871 marriage certificate of Philemon Witheridge and Mary Jane Carvath (Jennifer's great-grandparents), and a map showing the places in north Devon where the Philemon's ancestors had lived before moving to Porthleven, in south Cornwall, and from there to Australia.



## 2019 Reunion Report

We'd planned a 'brains trust' session led Liz and Kim, and although they fielded a few family history questions, the session finished earlier than planned. Expecting this, Kim had reproduced a family history quiz in multiple choice format that she'd originally compiled way back in 2005! Entitled 'The Way We Were', it had 50 questions looking at various elements of life in bygone times. We had fun guessing the right (or in many cases, wrong) answers from the four offered for each question, prompting much laughter. Liz was greatly surprised (although we weren't) to find that she was the winner by quite a margin.

During the afternoon refreshments were accompanied by the Witheridge birthday cake cut this year by Jennifer and Richard.



Once the official Reunion was over several of us gathered at 'The Crown', Leaves Green (just a couple of miles away), for a most enjoyable evening meal together. All in all, it was a relaxed, friendly and enjoyable Reunion.

It would be great to share our 2020 Reunion with more of our members.



# 2019 Annual General Meeting Minutes

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Witheridge FHS was held at St Mark's Centre, Church Road, Biggin Hill, Westerham, Kent, on 11 May 2019, from 10:45 to 13:45.

Attendees: Jason Cook (Chair), Amy Kennedy (Minutes), Kim Cook, Roy Cook, Liz Davey, Chris Davey, Philip Milnes-Smith, Jennifer Woolcott, and Richard Woolcott.

## 1 Chairman's opening and welcome

Jason Cook welcomed all present with thanks for attending, particularly to Australian Representatives Jennifer and Richard Woolcott. This marks the Society's 33<sup>rd</sup> annual reunion and 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

## 2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Brenda and Ron Dixon, Bill Dwyne, Dorothy Linter, Maxine Neale, Geoff and Catherine Shingler, Rob and Cathy Staples, Alison Smith, Jim Witheridge and David Torborg, Judith Witheridge, Kath Witheridge, Rod and Sue Witheridge and Susan Witheridge.

## 3 Minutes of the 2018 AGM held at St Mark's Centre, Biggin Hill, Kent TN16 3LB

These were read in full by the Chair, as detailed in Spring 2018 Newsletter.

## 4 Matters arising from these Minutes

Annette Witheridge can no longer be one of the Society's North America representatives as she has moved back to the UK.

Kim Cook has been unable to review the list of books and magazines held by the Society but has found this will no longer be useful as all but one are now obsolete. No revised list will be published, but details of the volume which remains in date will be shared in a future Newsletter once it has been reviewed. The books and magazines will be retained in case they are useful for historical reference.

The problems with our Facebook pages continue, and we have received no contact from Paul Barber, who has not shared admin access for them. We must therefore start new pages with different names instead to move forward, with a redirect in place from the old pages. The name chosen for the open page will need to specify it is for the family Witheridge and not the town in Devon. The new closed page, which will work by invitation by an administrator or existing member to ensure privacy, may be named 'the official' to distinguish from the equivalent old page. Jason Cook may approach Ethan Cook about supporting with this.

## 5 Matters arising from Officers' Reports

Reports from the Chairman, Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Research Coordinator and Webmaster, and on behalf of the Facebook Moderator, were included in the Winter 2018-2019 Newsletter.

Accounts for 2018-2019, as detailed in the Treasurer's Report, have now been audited.

Liz Davey has highlighted that outgoings have continued to exceed incoming funds from membership subscriptions. To resolve this problem:

- Kim Cook suggested separating the AGM and Reunion in future so the AGM can be virtual and the Reunion in a public place to avoid the cost of venue hire.
- Jason Cook considered if raising membership fees could be an option or if an increase would still provide value for money to members, and all agreed a potential increase to £15 may be acceptable, or £15 for families and £10 for individuals, particularly as the constitution already allows fees to be waived for individuals where needed due to financial circumstances.
- Kim Cook suggested selling prints of artwork held by the Society and photographs of historic family properties, but Jason Cook raised concerns about the market for selling these and suggested waiting to check levels of interest in the product on the new Facebook page before ordering any stock, as well as investigating the initial setup costs. Chris Davey suggested there could be some limited interest in these outside of the Society, with Kim Cook suggesting this may include societies for geographical areas e.g. Devon. All agreed a sub-committee would be the best way to take this idea forward.



# 2019 Annual General Meeting Minutes

## 6 Election of Officers and Committee Members

Votes were counted by the Chair for those present followed by those who voted in absentia:

<b>Chairman</b>	Jason Cook	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Chris Davey	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Geoff Shingler	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Treasurer</b>	Liz Davey	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Assistant Treasurer</b>	Chris Davey	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Research Coordinator</b>	Kim Cook	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Webmaster</b>	Bill Dwyne	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Facebook Moderator*</b>	Bill Dwyne	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
	Maxine Neale	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
	additional position vacant	
<b>Committee Members*</b>	Roy Cook	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
	Maxine Neale	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
	additional position vacant	
<b>Secretary</b>	Amy Kennedy	For: 8 + 3 = 11, Against: 0, Abstained: 0
<b>Newsletter Editor*</b>	position vacant	Amy Kennedy agreed to continue this along with secretarial services as no nominations were received

\*We will be accepting nominations for the vacant positions of Newsletter Editor, Facebook Moderator, and Committee Member. If you would like to volunteer or nominate someone with their agreement, please email our secretary, [amykennedy.ask@gmail.com](mailto:amykennedy.ask@gmail.com).

Jason Cook and Kim Cook plan to meet with new Committee Member and Facebook Moderator Maxine Neale face to face in the near future.

## 7 Overseas Representatives

Jennifer and Richard Woolcott have agreed to continue as the Society's Australian Representatives, and Jim Witheridge will continue as the Society's North America representatives.

## 8 Appointment of Auditor

Janice Cawsey has agreed to act as our Auditor again for the coming year.

## 9 Amendments to Facebook Pages

Further to earlier discussion resulting from Officers' Reports, Jason Cook explained the difference between an Administrator and a Moderator in Facebook; the Administrator controls invitations to join the group, while the Moderator reviews and controls the page content. Setting up the new pages with multiple Administrators would prevent a repeat of the issues experienced with the old pages. Kim Cook discussed potential privacy issues for both the open and closed pages and the need to ensure some Moderators are UK based and able to check adherence to GDPR. Jason Cook suggested it would be ideal to have some Moderators based outside the UK to manage different time zones and provide wider contacts.

Chris Davey suggested searching other social media, particularly LinkedIn, by name to identify possible Witheridge descendants and reach out to them.

# 2019 Annual General Meeting Minutes

## 10 Witheridge FHS Christmas Card for 2019

As agreed last year, we will be asking Hannah Shingler to design a card for us. We now have our Christmas cards printed by the company that produces Hannah's other work, and this will be arranged again by Amy Kennedy.

## 11 Date and venue for 2020 Reunion

The agreed most suitable date for the next reunion is 16 May 2020. However, Kim Cook is finding organising this more difficult and cannot do so next year, although she will still arrange research materials for the event. All present agreed a virtual AGM and low-key reunion may be the most suitable option going forward, as discussed while reviewing the Officers' Reports.

For a virtual AGM, all attendees must be invited and consent to sharing their email address with the rest of the group, because any replies would not be received by hidden blind-copied addressees to the original message. A change to the Constitution may need to be considered to allow the AGM to be held virtually, due to the present version stating that 4 people must be physically present, although the Cooks can meet this condition in the interim. A virtual AGM would not be on the same day as the reunion.

Another suggestion was to use an order service or caterer for future reunions if member and attendee numbers and funds increase.

This is to be investigated further before a decision is made and any proposals are welcomed, by no later than 1 February 2020.

## 12 Any other business

Richard Woolcott suggested placing a newspaper notice seeking other Witheridge descendants, advising that this service is free in Australia, and all agreed this would be worth pursuing in Australia but would not be viable in the UK due to the costs involved.

Jason Cook discussed changes to the website and confirmed the password is now changed annually and shared when membership fees are paid.

Jason Cook advised an EGM will need to be called to update the Constitution, if it is out of date as suggested when discussing the requirements of a virtual AGM.

Kim Cook advised she will share a tribute to Richard Witheridge in the next Newsletter, and messages for Maureen Witheridge were shared with all present.

At Jason Cook's suggestion, the Constitution was reviewed in regard to dissolution, as this may need to be considered if the previously discussed plans to expand do not achieve good results and membership numbers and funds continue to decline. Ideas were invited to retain the work collated over the years if this does become necessary, and Kim Cook proposed leaving the collection to a records centre, although there is no central office in Devon at present. Liz Davey offered the alternative of a genealogy society, although this does present the issue of an access fee. Jason Cook suggested an electronic copy or database, the technicalities of which would need to be investigated further. All agreed to keep this in mind, but with the main focus being on expansion activities which will hopefully prevent this becoming necessary.

## 13 Chairman closes meeting

**The Annual Reunion, at the same venue, followed immediately after the AGM.**

# Mayflower 400th Anniversary

## The Families They Left Behind

Devon FHS is hosting a '**Mayflower International Genealogical Conference**' in Plymouth on 29 August 2020. Although there were no Plymouth residents on board the *Mayflower*, Plymouth in Devon was the last port of call before the *Mayflower* finally left England.

Are you descended from one of the *Mayflower* passengers' families left behind in 17th century England? Maureen Selley, Secretary of the Devon FHS, hopes that some family history society members are interested in contributing to their '**The Families They Left Behind**' project.

If there is enough response and sufficient interest, Maureen plans to create a booklet containing that research, which will be attributed to the individuals or societies who supply the information. The booklet will be available at the August 2020 Conference, and for distribution afterwards. Much research has been done on the *Mayflower* descendants in the US, but much less work has been done on establishing where the passengers came from. It is Maureen's hope that, for at least some, there will be UK descendants who can say 'They came from here — and here's my family connection!'

*Mayflower* originally set sail from the Thames in July 1620, and made rendezvous with the *Speedwell* in Southampton about a week later. Both ships left Southampton early in August but *Speedwell* sprang a leak, and both ships put in to Dartmouth for repairs, before setting off again. About 200 miles off Land's End, the *Speedwell* again sprang a leak, and both ships turned back to Plymouth. Some of the *Speedwell*'s passengers chose to return to Holland, while others joined those on the *Mayflower*.

In September 1620, the *Mayflower* finally left England from Plymouth, with most of those on board intending to settle in the New World. There were 102 passengers on the *Mayflower*, including 37 members of the Separatist Leyden congregation. The Leyden congregation were English Puritans who had moved to Leyden in Holland to escape persecution, and who later became known as the Pilgrims. In total, there were 74 male passengers and 28 female. Of these, 18 were listed as servants, 13 of whom were attached to Separatist families. At the start of the journey, there were 31 children on the *Mayflower*. Another (aptly named Oceanus) was born during the voyage., and one, named Peregrine (meaning migrant) was born while the ship was at anchor in Cape Cod Harbour, and is officially recognised as the first English child born in New England. The crew was led by Captain Christopher Jones, also a part-owner of the ship, who was born in Harwich. The total number of crew members is unknown. Names and places of origin for passengers can be checked at:

<https://www.mayflower400uk.org/education/mayflower-passengers-list-an-interactive-guide>

These passengers came from: **Tingrith** and **Henlow** in Beds; **Welford** near Newbury in Berks; **Bristol**; **Fenstanton** and **Wisbech** in Cambs; **Harwich** and **Great Burstead** in Essex; **Rotherwick**, **Upper Clatford**, **Hursley**, and **Winchester** in Hants; **Watford** and **Therfield** in Herts; **Sandwich** and **Canterbury** in Kent; **Eccleston** and **Chorley** in Lancs; **Swannington** in Leics; **East Halton** in Lincs; **London**; **Redenhall**, **Norwich**, and **Great Yarmouth** in Norfolk; **Scrooby**, **Babworth**, **Sturton-le-Steeple**, and **Worksop** in Notts; **Shipton** and **Stanton** in Shropshire; **Ipswich**, **Stratford St Mary**, and **Chattisham** in Suffolk; **Dorking** in Surrey; **Crowhurst** in Sussex; **Droitwich** in Worcs; and **Austerfield** and **Doncaster** in South Yorks.

These pioneers had intended to land in the new colony of Virginia, where they had permission to settle. However, winter gales and currents took the *Mayflower* much further north, to Cape Cod. Efforts to sail southward to their original destination made little headway and, with crew and passengers becoming more restless and disgruntled, the ship finally anchored off the Cape on 11 November.

# Mayflower 400th Anniversary

## The Families They Left Behind

During that first winter, many passengers stayed on board, while search expeditions looked for settlement sites, trading opportunities, and sources of food. Some of the passengers who stayed on board became ill and, in the close confinement, disease spread. By the spring of 1621, when huts had been built ashore, only 53 passengers and half the crew had survived.

Who had they left behind in England? Did their families at home know who had survived and who had perished? Are there any descendants of the *Mayflower's* passengers and crew who stayed in England or Leyden and are still living there? For those who have ancestors from the areas these early migrants came from, it would be fascinating to research any possible links.

Other places involved in the commemorations include: **Gainsborough, Boston, Immingham, Southwark, Rotherhithe, Southampton, Dartmouth and Plymouth.**

For more details go to

<https://www.mayflower400uk.org/>.

To contact Maureen Selley, email her at

[secretary@devonfhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@devonfhs.org.uk)



*Mayflower II*, a reproduction of the original *Mayflower*, in 2014.

She was built in Brixham, Devon in 1955-56, and presented to the American people in recognition of the WWII alliance between Britain and the USA.

*Mayflower II* has spent three years in dock for a refit and preservation work, in preparation for her role at the centre of American celebrations of the 400th Anniversary of the original *Mayflower's* arrival in New England.

Kim Cook