



Volume 3

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Spring 1989

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## Editorial

Is it just increasing age that seems to make the years fly by ever faster and faster? Certainly 1988 seemed to pass at an amazing rate, and much too quickly for our magazine production to keep up. So although we promised you four issues of Witheridge Times a year, we were unable to maintain the necessary time schedule and produced only the three issues in 1988. Nevertheless, it is still our intention to produce four issues each year.

We will only be able to do this with your help. We need your comments, articles, family news items etc. anything to help fill out each issue. It is this kind of participation that will link us all together into one big Wi(e)theridge family. You will see in this issue that we can now reproduce photographs, coloured or black and white. We are continually trying to improve the standard of our magazine.

Work is proceeding apace on the Witheridge Handbook. If you haven't already sent Joyce Brown the list of names you are interested in, please do so now. Although it is only the male surname that is handed down through the generations, we are just as much members of the families of our female antecedents, so knowing something about the female lines should be of interest to all of us.

Plans are going ahead for our Witheridge Day reunion in Alderton, Gloucestershire, on Monday 1st May (May Day Bank Holiday). For those who would like to make a long weekend of it, there are many interesting places to visit in the area, and some good accommodation to be had locally.

As part of the Witheridge Day programme, we are featuring a display of art and craft produced by us Witheridges, both past and present. This is not a competition. So if you have any paintings, embroidery, carving, pottery, woodwork or other artefacts, please bring them with you.

At the Witheridge Day meeting we will also have a duplicating machine, so that you will be able to ask for those copies of any certificates you need. Will you also please bring along any certificates that you have, ie birth, marriage, death etc, so that the society can take a copy.

I'm really looking forward to Witheridge Day and to meeting, either again, or, for the first time, many of our members. Hope to see you there!

Kim Cook



# **Sidney Phillip Witheridge, 1898–1971, his life and times.**

by Philip Henry Witheridge

## **Forword**

Sidney Phillip Witheridge was my father, and since joining the Witheridge Society I have been making notes on the events of my father's life and trying to remember all the many stories he told. At the Witheridge Day May 2nd 1988 I exhibited some of the documents, the photographs and other personnel items which were once my father's.

For me his life was fascinating, not because of any great achievements on his part, but because he lived through times of great change. In order to fill out this copy of the Witheridge Times, I offer you this résumé of my fathers life and times.

## **Ermington and his early life**

Sid, as he was always known, was born in Ermington, which is near Plymouth in South Devon. He was born at No.4 Church Street, to Philip Henry and Rhoda Adelaide Witheridge on the 20th May 1898. Sid was followed by other children, a sister, Eveline Maud, and brothers, Henry, Arthur John, Samuel Leslie Mumford, and finally, William Bowden.

Sid attended the village school, was a choir-boy at the village church of Saints Peter and Paul, which is renowned for it's crooked spire (see picture). He also attended the church Sunday school. I have two of his Sunday school prizes for the years 1909 and 1910, both signed by the vicar, the Revd. Edmund Pinwill. He was also a boy scout. I have his scout hat badges and his bushman's thong. This meant that he had passed his first class scout badge and had also passed other badges in field craft. These were the early days of scouting following the



publication of Baden-Powell's book in 1908, 'Scouting for boys'.

After school, Sid was apprenticed as a blacksmith at a forge in Ivybridge. It was intended that he would add to the skills of the family wheelwright business.

#### **Nowt for his trouble.**

A story my father told involved himself as a youngster and a neighbour's tom cat. The neighbour was receiving numerous complaints about the cat's nocturnal calling for female company. Eventually the neighbour gave way to the complaints and offered to pay my father to put the cat down.

In those days there were no vets around with their death easing needles. The normal procedure was to tie the cat in a sack, weight it with stones and to drop it in the deepest water one could find. My father dropped the tied sack with its contents in the deep water under Erm bridge and returned to the neighbours house to collect his payment.

The door was opened to his knock and the neighbour reached out to pay him. At that instant, the wet, furious and bristling cat flew past them both, through the open door and on into the house. Needless to say my father was not paid, and the cat lived on and continued to annoy the neighbourhood.

#### **Sid and the 1st World War.**

On 4th August 1914 Great Britain entered the war against Germany. The 1st World War had started. At first little happened. There was a scare of 'Fifth Column' infiltration and the Ermington scouts were called upon to check the road traffic across Erm bridge. My father amongst them stood his guard.

A little later my father put his age on a year and enlisted. He served throughout the first world war and for a further year afterwards, in the Royal Navy. We know of two ships in which he served, from his hat band in a photograph, HMS Roxboro, and from photographs of his ship, HMS New Zealand.

Sid, told of his war experiences. His ship was at first employed escorting convoys of merchantmen across the Atlantic. He told of



reaching port in England after the harbour defensive boom had been lowered, and of spending the night frantically chasing an enemy submarine that got to the convoy and sank a number of the ships. He also spoke of catching a submarine on the surface so that they were able to ram it with their specially strengthened bows. The submarine stuck fast on their bows and they had to steam astern all the way back to port at Birkenhead, dragging the submarine with them. As they arrived Sid saw for the first time Army Tanks exercising on the shore.

Sid was in the battle of Jutland, I assume in HMS New Zealand. He told of being part of a squadron of three ships positioned away from the main battle fleets, so that they could raise the alarm should the German fleet turn their way. All three ships were reported sunk by the press but Sid's mother didn't believe the news. As it turned out she was correct. A mistake had been made, another squadron of three ships had been sunk. For my fathers squadron it was an uneventful battle. As his ship entered the Tyne afterwards they passed the remains of HMS Chester with its solitary remaining gun turret. It was here that another ex-scout Jack Cornwell stood by his gun although mortally wounded. Jack Cornwell was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

After the signing of the armistice, Admiral Jerrico transferred his flag to HMS New Zealand and my father stayed in the Navy for another year to go round the world showing the flag. My cousin Richard rescued a series of photographs recording this around the world tour to Australia, New Zealand, India, through the Panama canal and to America.

**Business as usual**

After the war and his world cruise Sid came back to work in the family business. His father, Philip Henry (see photo of him and his wife Rhoda, Sid's parents) had already returned from the war on the Somme. He had served in the Army Ordinance Corps, and had reached the rank of sergeant.

Sid's father had brought back from the Somme battlefields a cutting of a vine which he planted in his garden allotment above the church. A number of cuttings were taken, once the vine had become



established, by those who had reason to remember the men who didn't return. This vine must have grown there for a number of years because my first cousin, a daughter of Evelin Maud my father's sister, can remember picking the grapes from the vine where it grew inside an old greenhouse on the allotment.

Sid's first cousin, John Witheridge Edmunds, did not return from the war. John, also in the navy, died in the Dardenelles Campaign of 1915.

Depression followed the war, and work was hard to come by. My father spoke of shuttering work on a bridge at Ivybridge, of building a house of wood, of converting carts to horse drawn buses for the local carriers and also of converting ex-army lorries to buses.

Mumford's garage of Plymouth were running bus tours with converted army lorries. 'Mumford's Purple Tours', they were called. Sid's mother's maiden name was Mumford. Was there a connection?

My cousin Richard has a photograph showing the family firm roofing a newly built stone walled bungalow and we both have the same photograph of the family around and at work in the firm's saw pit. My father often spoke of the saw pit, of the seasoning of the timber and of how they would select pieces of wood which were twisted for use in making the shafts for horse drawn carts or for other items requiring shaping.

Times were hard, and to cap it all my father was called up again in 1921 in case of civil unrest. A Naval Brigade was formed and accommodated under canvas on Salisbury Plain. They were not deployed and were soon returned to their homes once more.

It was at this time that Sid met my mother, Winifred Emily Frederica Lund. She had been brought up in Plymouth and after school had come to Ermington to work in service for a retired Naval officer—we think at Fawns House, which was just over Erm bridge from Ermington.

It was at this time that Sid tried to enter the newly formed Royal Air Force. At first he was turned down because he had a gold filling in one of his teeth. He turned to Winifred's employer to pull strings on his behalf. This paid off because he was eventually accepted.

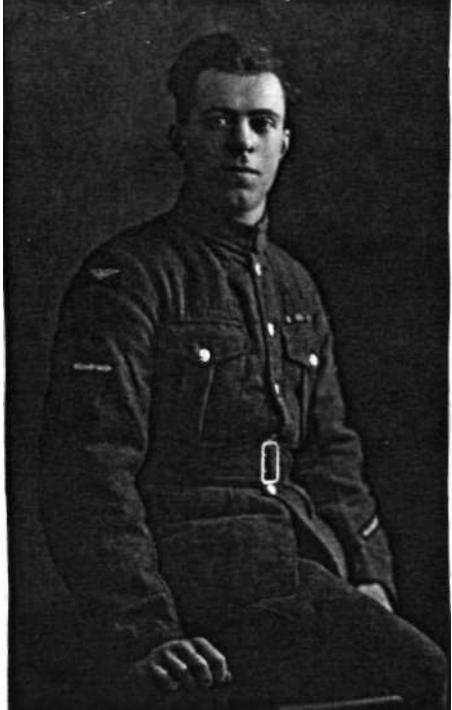
#### **Aircraftsman Witheridge, Blacksmith**

On the 29th December 1923 Aircraftsman Sidney Philip Witheridge residing at Bittlefield, Nr Shrewsbury, was married to Winifred Lund, who was residing in Ermington. The marriage was carried out by the Revd. Pinwill Vicar in Ermington Church.

Whilst my father was stationed at Bittlefield, my mother and father lived in accommodation over a bakers shop in the old town centre of Shrewsbury. My father worked at his trade of blacksmith. He was mainly involved in making and repairing the broken springs of the RAF motor vehicles. My father was paid both in money and in kind. My mother said that she had to parade at the camp each week, to draw rations.

The lodgings, which my parents had, contained a piano and this resulted in musical evenings. My father played the violin, my mother would sing and play a mandolin strung as a ukulele, and a friend, nicknamed Wiskers, also in the RAF, came and played the piano. This friend later in life became famous as the leader of a choir of boys called the 'Silver Songsters'.

I can remember playing the 78 rpm records of this choir on our wind up, 'His masters Voice' gramophone when I was about ten years old.



### **Leading Aircraftsman Witheridge, Airgunner/Blacksmith**

Some time in 1926 my father was accepted for flying as aircrew. This is not the sophisticated selection procedure of today's airforce. In my father's time it consisted of the prospective airman being taken for a flight and scared witless by all kinds of aerobatics. My father survived this initiation and next his flying logs record him in November 1926 being trained in India with No. 27 Squadron as an airgunner. This entitled him to wear on the upper right arm above his LAC propeller, the 'Flying Bullet', the airgunner's insignia of those days.



My fathers flying career is recorded in three volumes of flying log books, by his hand, from the first flight on the 15th November 1926 until almost nine years, or 1095 hours and 5 minutes of flying time, later the last entry was

made on the 22nd of July 1335. This flying time was split: 680 hours and 15 minutes with No. 27 Squadron in India and 414 hours and 50 minutes with No. 40 Squadron in England.

On his arrival in India No. 27 Squadron were flying in de-Havilland DH9A's (see the centre fold picture). These planes were two-seater biplanes, with a maximum speed of 123 mph, and an endurance of five and a half hours. They were capable of carrying a bomb load of 450 lbs under the lower wing, and were armed with a fixed Vickers gun fired by the pilot and a manually aimed Lewis gun fired by the airgunner.

The airgunner was also expected to aim and drop the bombs, to navigate and map read, to carry out aerial photography and to operate and direction find using wireless. I believe that the passenger cockpit of the DH9A was equipped with a duplicate set of flying controls and the airgunners were trained to take over and land the aircraft in an emergency. All of these flying duties were in addition to those of his ground trade of blacksmith.

Later on the DH9A's were replaced with Westland Wapitis which were similar to the DH9A's but with an improved performance and they were also more reliable.

My mother sailed from Liverpool on the 22nd April 1927 in the S.S. Trafford Hall to join my father in India. I have a copy of the ships passenger list which my mother had autographed by some of the passengers and ships officers. She kept it as a memento. My mother worked as a governess looking after officers children whilst she was in India, that is until the birth of my sister was imminent.

In 1930 at Kohat, my father won the 'Airgunners Bombing Cup' with an error of 41.2 yards from a height of 10,000 feet. I now have this cup. My father contended that his success was due to having a pilot who was willing to co-operate closely with him. I have looked at the log book for this period and believe that pilot to be Flying Officer McKee. My father said that at the first attempt the judges did not believe the results and so they were sent up again. They did even better on the second occasion.

My father flying logs show a number of flights marked active operations. These flights were, 3 off in June 1927, 1 off in January 1928, 3 off in September 1928, 41 off over the period May to August 1930, 13 off over the period August to October 1931, 8 off in March 1932 and 10 off September to October 1932 (see page 13). These flights consisted mainly of bombing raids on named villages of dissident tribesmen on the North West Frontier of India. Some times they flew in support of army operations on the ground, such as the relief of Chitrah. My father was awarded the campaign medal for the North West Frontier for the years 1930 and 1931.

My sister was born during one of these periods of unrest. My mother was confined in the hospital at Kohat which was outside the perimeter of the military area. Riots were occurring outside the hospital. My mother admitted to being afraid, as she had only an Indian nurse in attendance. My father could not be with her as he was away on active duty at the time. As it happened everything turned out alright and my sister Barbara Ann was born on the 13th March 1932. To the Gurka soldiers, her volunteer nursemaids, my sister was known as 'Barbery Wallah'.

The last entry in India in my father's log was dated the 4th November 1932. So sometime after this date the family returned to England.

### **The one that got away**

On one of his bombing raids one of the bombs carried under the lower wing did not fall clear when it was released. It was very dangerous to land with a bomb hung up in this way. It was likely to free itself with the bump as the wheels touched down and blow the plane up, not to mention making a nasty hole in the runway.

The pilot selected an uninhabited area to fly over whilst Sid climbed out to free the bomb. Sid eventually achieved this and watched the bomb fall and explode in the brush below. Much to my father's surprise an Indian man appeared out of the brush, running at speed obviously very startled by the explosion and as he ran the mans turban slowly unwound behind him like a slip steam.

### **Caught out by an Air Pocket**

On the airfield the bombs were stored in a enclosure, well out of harms way, and covered by a steel plate. In the sun this plate got very hot and the air above it formed an air pocket close to the ground. My father's pilot, on landing one day, flew into this pocket and, before they knew it, they fell onto the bomb-dump cover, bounced clear and finally came to rest on the ground beyond it. My father ended up standing in his gunner's position behind the sitting pilot with the collapsed wreckage of their aircraft all around them.

### **Water in the fuel**

When a long flight beyond the aircraft's range was required, a staging point would be arranged where the aircraft could land and refuel on the way to their final destination. The squadron undertook such a flight except that after they had refueled and were flying again, one aircraft after another developed engine trouble and had to make a forced landing. It was later found that the Indian who was supposed to look after the staging point had sold some of the fuel and to hide the fact had topped up the containers with water.

### **Claim to Fame**

Another story my father would tell was that during his time in India he attended the same man's funeral on three separate occasions.

On parade one day the Sergeant-major (in the early days the army ranks were still in use) asked if anyone was a musician. My father trying to be clever said he could play a tin whistle. "You'll do" said the sergeant-major, and my father found that he had volunteered to join the station band.

As is the nature of young pilots, certain daring feats had to be undertaken. One of these was to fly under a bridge which spanned one of the tributaries of the river Indus. One of the pilots attempting this feat, crashed and was killed. A body was recovered some time later downstream but a positive identification was not possible. The body was assumed to be his and my father as a bandsman, attended the funeral. The body was buried in a military cemetery.

A short time later, another body was recovered from the Indus, this time identification was possible, and the body was buried in the parapet of the bridge under which he had attempted to fly. Again as a bandsman my father attended the funeral.

Much later, just before my father returned to England, the bridge was to be replaced with another more substantial bridge, and so the pilot's body buried in the parapet was removed and re-interred in a military cemetery. As there were no longer anyone in India who knew the pilot, my father as the next best thing to a friend, having attended both of his previous funerals, attended his third.

### **Laurence of Arabia**

From time to time my father would fly into the airfield at Peshawar, which is close to the Kyber Pass. It was here that Aircraftsman Shaw (Alias Laurence of Arabia) was stationed working as a storeman. There was no secret about this at all, as it was common knowledge at that camp. The general opinion was that he was there spying on the Russians, as he spent a lot of time conversing with the Afgan tribesmen, who regularly crossed and re-crossed the boundary between India and Russia to the north.

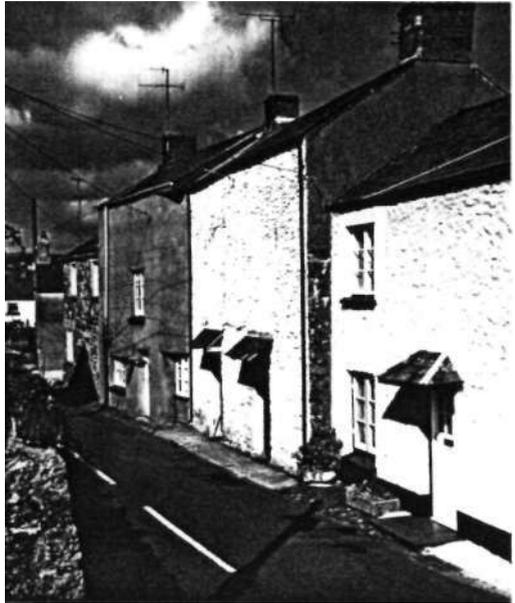
Just in passing, Laurence of Arabia also has associations with the flying boat station at Mount Batten where he started the airsea rescue branch for the RAF. This station is close to Plymouth and the lost Doomsday Book Manor of Wetheridge.

#### **No. 4 Church St Ermington**

This house has been home to a number of Witheridges over the years. We aren't sure when it was first used by the family, but my cousin Richard has a photograph showing our great grandmother Sarah sitting in front of it. In 1930 Sid's father died as a result of injuries from a road accident at Yealmbridge, and sometime after this, whilst I think my father was in India, the landlord tried to evict Sid's widowed mother.

Sid, much to my mother's consternation, drew out their combined savings and bought the house. Sid's mother lived on there until she died in 1950. My cousin Richard also lived there for a number of years as he was brought up by his grandmother. In 1950 my father went down to his mother's funeral and put in hand the sale of the house.

I can only remember visiting the house at the end of the first world war in 1946. The house had three floors, each of the upper floors consisted of a bedroom and a large landing, and on the ground floor there was a living room with a cooking range and a separate scullery (The photo shows the front of the house, the fourth doorway from the right).



#### **Back in England again**

The next entry in Sid's flying log is for the 7th March 1933 and shows my father flying with No. 40 Squadron from Abingdon.

On this first flight with No. 40 Squadron, Corporal Witheridge flew with the Squadron Leader, Malcolm Taylor, in aircraft Fairy Gordon No. K1736 for 45 minutes cross country over Bicester and Heyford, returning to Abingdon afterwards. Was his new squadron leader checking him out? Whilst this was happening I would expect that my mother would have been unpacking all the tea chests used to ship back their personnel possessions from India. I have a carved table, two brass bowls, and a carved box bearing the airforce's insignia on its lid around me now as I write this article.

All of these items were bought in India and brought back to England and would have been unpacked as my mother once again set up home in yet another married quarter.

No. 40 Squadron was equipped with Fairy Gordon aircraft. These were again two seater biplanes. They had a max speed of 145 miles/hr and a range of 600 miles. They were capable of carrying a bomb load of 460 lbs under the lower wing, and were again armed with a fixed Vickers gun fired by the pilot and a manually aimed Lewis gun fired by the airgunner.

It was with this squadron that Sid was introduced to flying in cloud and at night using instruments. I also noted that the practice of ripping the parachute at regular intervals commenced in 1934. I suppose they didn't have parachutes before this date.

My father was always proud of his bombing skill. I can remember examining a bomb sight he had designed and constructed, I believe during his time with No. 40 Squadron. It was however never taken beyond the initial prototype stage.

On the 6th July 1934, a son was born in RAF Halton Hospital and named Philip Henry after his Grandfather (This is me being born).

#### **The RAF scores over the Navy**

In September 1933 No. 40 Squadron exercised with HMS Centurion in the English Channel. Seventeen flights are recorded practice bombing this ship and also having tactical exercises with the fleet in the Firth of Forth (see page 16). The Admiralty doubted the effectiveness of aircraft bombing a ship.

My father told of the squadron being briefed before one of these practice bombing flights. They were told to assume that HMS Centurion would turn immediately to starboard as soon as the squadron was sighted preparing to bomb. As it happened the Navy did just that, and all of the squadron's bombs scored direct hits.

#### **The biggest beard in the RAF**

At some time in his flying career Sid, had an accident with a practice bomb. These bombs contained two chemicals which on impact were mixed and produced a vapour like smoke. One of these practice bombs went off whilst Sid was handling it and he was burnt on one side of his face and in one eye. Could this have ended his flying career? It's possible.

Father would tell us the gruesome details of how they dropped his eye out of its socket to hang down his cheek for treatment. He was not disfigured at all, although not being able to shave he grew the biggest beard in the RAF.

September 1932

time carried forward :-

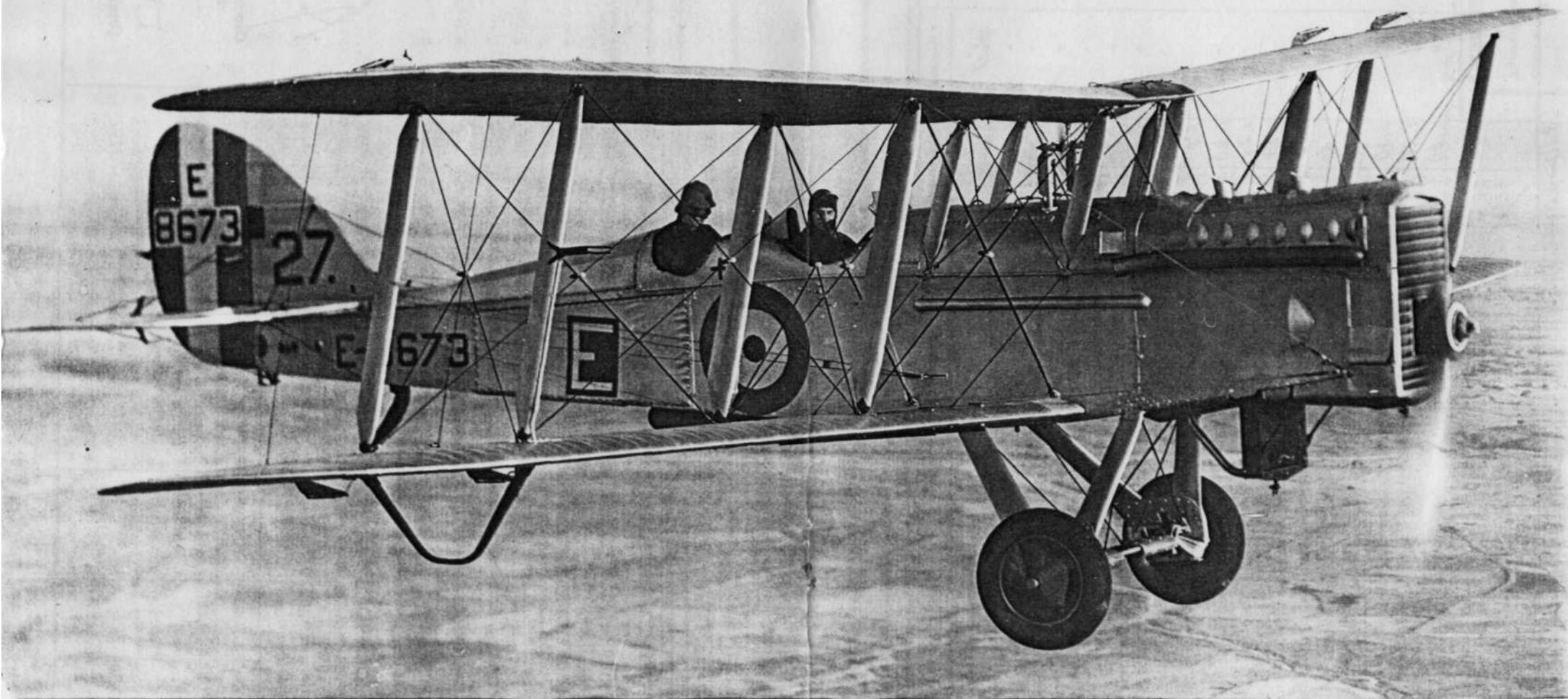
Date and Hour	Aeroplane Type and No.	Pilot	Passenger(s)	Time	Height
17 <sup>th</sup> 1150	Wapiti J9504	St. Thomas	Self	2 hrs	25 mins
17 <sup>th</sup> 1610	"	"	"	2	20
18 <sup>th</sup> 0930	J9732	"	"	2	40
19 <sup>th</sup> 0650	J9504	"	"	2	20
19 <sup>th</sup> 1010	"	"	"	2	30
20 <sup>th</sup> 1535	J9716	"	"	2	30
22 <sup>nd</sup> 1620	J9446	"	"	2	25
25 <sup>th</sup> 1600	J8805	"	"	2	45
Total September				19	55
Previous				647	50
Grand Total				667	45

TOTAL TIME :-

Course	REMARKS
Active Service	Bombing Raid Chingari (village)
"	" " " "
"	" " Bandogari (village)
"	" " Chingari
"	" " " "
"	" " Kudala (village)
"	" " " "
"	" " Bandogari (village)

Commanding 'B' Flight  
25<sup>th</sup> Sept. R. A. F.

J. Anderson  
Commanding Officer



Sid took this photograph of the De-Haviland DH9A from an identical aircraft flying alongside.



In later life, if you looked closely, you could see a mark in his eye and he could never shave the one side of his face without cutting himself. I can still see him covered on that side of his face with the little pieces of news-paper he used to stop the flow of blood.

### **Sid with his feet on the ground again**

Sid's last flight was on the 22nd July 1935, and he reverted to his ground trade. He was a blacksmith once more. I have little documentation to cover this period but I believe he moved to Manston in Kent, and the family to Broadstairs and later to Northwood Rd. in Ramsgate.

At this time that he was promoted to sergeant, and on the 14th March 1939 a third child was born, my brother John Michael. I can remember this last event very clearly because a friend of my mother's looked after us during his birth. This lady was known to us all as Auntie Emmie. The reason I can remember it is that she made me eat up all my cabbage.

### **The Second World War at RAF Hednesford**

At the beginning of the second world war my father was posted to RAF Hednesford in Staffordshire in the Midlands. We, his family, followed him after a little while, and moved into No. 11 Birch Avenue in Cannock. Before we followed dad, however, we had to suffer a number of enemy bombing raids, whilst we were still in Ramsgate.

This was an uneventful war for my father. He was an instructor in his trade of Blacksmith, teaching both RAF and Fleet Air Arm personnel. He was eventually promoted to flight sergeant.

We saw little of the war in the midlands. Sometimes we would see the glow on the horizon at night as Birmingham or Coventry were being bombed. The odd enemy bomber would lose his way and jettison his bomb load in our vicinity. We did however see the rationing and the queues and the Americans.

Each morning dad would get on his bicycle and ride off to work at Hednesford, and at night he would cycle home again as regular as clockwork. At Christmas the camp would put on a party for us children. I remember at one of these parties. All three of us children received a present of a rabbit each. The rabbits had wet their boxes so that by the time we got home in the bus we were very wet, and smelly. This was the last sort of present our parents would have thought suitable for us, but we all couldn't have been happier.

### **The art competition**

On thursday evenings father would return from Hednesford with a Pictorial magazine, and if we were lucky a NAAFI swiss roll. On the front of one of these magazines was a picture of the beautiful Madam Chieng Kai-shek. The family, except my brother who was too young, all drew from this picture as a competition to find the best artist. The winner was never declared, but I think that we were all impressed with the others' efforts. It was the first time that we had realised that we all had a talent for drawing.

### **Musical Sundays**

Both my sister and myself were given piano lessons, although neither of us took to playing the piano. My music teacher was a Jehovah's Witness, and was for ever preaching that the end of the world was nigh. In those days I lived by the day, thankful as I awoke each morning that the world hadn't ended whilst I slept.

My father and mother struck a bargain with my music teacher, he was allowed to preach to them on a sunday afternoon provided he would play the piano for them afterwards. I think my father got the best of this bargain because not only did he and my mother enjoy his playing, my father also enjoyed the religious discussion which preceded the recital.



Sid and family taken about 1942.

## **Civilian Street once more**

My father was one of the first to be demobilised after the war. He had completed more than the twenty one years of his regular engagement. He left with a pension and a determination to work for himself. He went into business repairing the bodywork of motor cars, but undertook any work involving welding. At this time the production of new cars was not significant, there was a big demand to keep those cars that were on the road in continuing use.

At first he used a coal merchants yard in Chadsmoor, Nr Cannock, for his business on the agreement that he would undertake the repair of the merchant's fleet of lorries.

Later we moved house to Wedges Mills, also Nr Cannock, where he built his own workshop. In addition to the house we acquired a large garden and a one and a half acre field. The field was very wet and rushes grew all over it. Sid set to work clearing the ditches to improve the drainage of the field. The soil was almost all peat. I can remember that we lit a bonfire and it continued to burn for a number of days and left a two to three foot deep hole when it finally went out. Here we started keeping pigs, goats, and poultry and producing and selling vegetables.

At this time my help would often be needed. I would be required to hold sheet metal or pieces of car bodies whilst my father was welding. Also I would stand by with a watering can in case of fire as most cars at that time were built with wood in their construction and there was always the upholstery. Every so often the nozzle of the welding torch would block and there followed an explosion of sparks as the nozzle cleared itself. When this occurred I would always jump especially when the sparks landed on my arms. My father would take a dim view of this especially if the part I was holding moved. He would then curse 'Hells Bells' or berate me calling me a 'Stiffner' or a 'Binder', terms which I assume came from his flying days.

Some of the cars which were repaired or owned by my father are also memorable to me. I remember we worked together through the night repairing an MG sports car, arriving home in time for breakfast, and of the Austin 10 we owned for a short while. It was a two seater with a dicky seat in the boot. Cars didn't stay with us for long as they were part of the business. being bought in a delapidated state and sold on again as soon as they were repaired.

After a while my father was not able to sustain a living in this way. More cars were coming available and people were not willing to continue paying the cost of repairing bodywork of old cars.

At this time he returned to working for others. He worked at Littleton Colliery, Cannock, at the Carbon Black Co. Four Ashes, and finally for the Midlands Gas Board. He worked in this last job for about 10 years and received another pension from it when he finally retired.

With the Gas Board he was part of a mobile team, travelling extensively around the Midlands, moth-balling, salvaging and repairing gas board plant during the establishment of the national gas grid system and the taking out of use of the old 'Town's Gas' local gas works.

### Life after work

When he eventually retired in 1963, he lived with mother in Wheaton Aston, Nr Stafford. Here he gardened as he had done all his life, paraded as always with his medals on armistice day, took his grandchildren for walks when they came to visit and rang the church bells in the neighbouring village of Lapley.



When ever I think of my father, I picture him enjoying a smoke of his pipe, having a breather from his gardening, spade in hand. Throughout his life each garden he had was tended and cultivated and there must have been nigh on a dozen different gardens all told. He smoked a pipe throughout his life and this eventually put paid to him. His habit of smoking 'thick twist' resulted in him dying, at the age of 72 years in 1971, with cancer of the throat.

He now lies buried with my mother, who died later in 1982, in the churchyard of Lapley Church. Their grave is overlooked by the church tower where Sid had made music of a Sunday, ringing the bells.

# The Jargon of Genealogy

by Kim Cook

These days, every occupation and every hobby seems to have a jargon of its own. Genealogy and family history are not exempt!

However, while jargon in other fields tends to have grown up around modern technological developments, ours has, on the whole, come from the past.

Few people stop to think about one of the most fundamental changes in British life that affects everyone delving into history - the changes in language itself. Quite apart from the basic changes in historical documents, involving Old English, Latin and Old French, there have been many more subtle changes in the usage and meaning of words, some of them comparatively recent and likely to be encountered by even the newest researchers.

For instance, 'settlement' nowadays usually refers either to movement of land, or to the adjudication of a pay claim or other dispute, while 'tenement' usually implies high-density Victorian slum housing. For the family historian, both words have quite different meanings.

Sometimes, even when the basic meaning of a word has stayed the same, its implications are vastly different. For example, apprenticeship today is a totally different proposition from what it was, say 150 years ago.

Then there are words which have virtually disappeared from the modern vocabulary. How often have you heard words like messuage, cordwainer and socage in conversation? (If you have heard them frequently, you probably number some keen genealogists among your acquaintances!)

In addition, there can be misunderstandings about official terms and abbreviations. There are still many people who think that birth certificates can be found at Somerset House, or who confuse PRO with GRO.

In my early blunderings in the field of family history, I often longed for a simple dictionary of genealogical jargon, but never having found one I had to resort to making my own list as I went along. While I don't pretend that this list is anything like complete, it does cover most of the terms that new researchers are likely to encounter and I hope our members will find it useful.

**administration, letters of:** granted in cases where a deceased person left no will, or where some other problem, such as death of the executor occurred, to enable surviving members of the family to dispose of the estate.

**admons:** abbreviation for letters of administration.

**allegation:** statement or declaration made by parties wishing to marry by special licence, giving names, ages, descriptions, parentage and home parish of bride and groom.

**annuitant:** person in receipt of an annuity or annual pension.

**apprenticeship:** system of giving a minor into care of an adult other than his or her parent, to be trained in a particular trade or occupation. It was customary for apprentices to live in with their masters, and youngsters were often apprenticed from the tender age of eight or nine, until they were 21.

**armigerous:** having the right to bear arms. It is an offence to display a coat of arms to which one cannot prove entitlement.

**BM:** British Museum, now British Library (qv).

**BT:** Bishop's transcript (qv).

**base:** born, or conceived, out of wedlock.

**bastardy bond:** a bond taken out against the father of an illegitimate child, compelling him to provide financial support for the child. This action was often taken by the parish wardens to ensure that the child did not become a financial liability to the parish funds.

**birth brief:** chart or list showing a person's direct antecedents on all lines, usually for four or five generations.

**Bishop's transcript:** transcript of all parish register entries required to be sent by the minister to his Bishop. Although supposed to be exact copies of registers, they rarely were, and often have both omissions from, and entries additional to, the original register.

**Boyd's Citizens of London:** a typescript list of London families, mainly of the seventeenth century, with a manuscript index. This can be seen at the library of the Society of Genealogists.

**Boyd's Marriage Index:** an index of marriages compiled from parish registers, Bishop's transcripts and marriage licences in England, covering some seventeen counties in individual sections, with two further miscellaneous sections. The index was begun by Mr Percival Boyd in 1925, and following his death in 1935 the work was taken over by the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The time span covered by the index is 1538-1837, but this is by no means complete. A booklet listing the parishes covered is available from the Society of Genealogists.

**British Library:** national repository of historic books and documents (formerly British Museum).

**c:** abbreviation for circa (qv).

**C:** abbreviation for century.

**cadet:** a younger son of a family; a cadet branch of a family is one descended from a younger son.

**census:** a numbering of the population of the country. The first national census in England was in 1801, with subsequent counts following every ten years. However, little remains of the first four census returns, but from 1841 onwards the returns are virtually complete. Those up to and including 1881 are available for inspection at the PRO, but those for 1891 onward are not available to the general public, but can be seen in certain circumstances, on completion of special formalities and for a fee.

**circa:** about, used to indicate an approximate date.

**cordwainer:** early term for a shoemaker or leather-worker.

**dsp:** decessit sine prole, ie died without issue.

**Dissenter:** a person not belonging to the established church of his country; a Nonconformist.

**ecclesiastical records:** records relating to the church, including not only parish registers, but such items as marriage licence allegations, ecclesiastical court records, guardianship appointments, apprenticeship records, poor relief accounts, churchwardens' accounts and many other items of considerable value to the family historian.

**Enclosure Awards:** documents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries showing distribution and ownership of enclosed land (as opposed to common land) within a parish, and often also listing previous owners of the land.

**Faculty Office:** ecclesiastical department responsible for issuing marriage licences where the parties concerned lived in different provinces (ie one in the province of Canterbury and the other in York province).

**fine:** an agreement following a lawsuit (often fictitious) over ownership of land, in order that the owner could have the land recorded as his in a legal document, and thus avoid the possibility of genuine legal wrangles at a later date. The term comes from the Latin word for 'end', indicating the end of any possible dispute over ownership.

**GRO:** General Register Office (qv).

**Genealogists, Society of:** international society for those enthusiastic about genealogy and anxious to further their research. The Society has an extremely useful library with a vast coverage of areas and types of records. Use of the library is free to members, but non-members may use it on payment of a fee. The Society's library and offices are at 14 Charterhouse Buildings, London EC1.

**General Register Office:** home of all records of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales since civil registration began on 1st July 1837, as well as of records of registrations with British Consulates abroad. It is now at St Catherine's House, Kingsway, London WC2.

**Hearth Tax:** a subsidy granted by Parliament to the crown, from 1660-1674. People who could prove that they were too poor to contribute were granted exemption certificates, some of which still survive. See also subsidy rolls.

**heraldry:** the study of coats of arms and the rights of individuals to make use of them.

**Huguenots:** French Protestants.

**hundred:** an area of land of undefined quantity. In earlier times counties were divided into hundreds, rather as today they are divided into boroughs.

**IGI:** International Genealogical Index, produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The IGI is available for examination at some Mormon Temples, many record offices, Society of Genealogists and other specialist libraries.

**incumbent:** holder of ecclesiastic office, usually used to refer to the priest, minister, rector etc, of a parish.

**indenture:** contract of apprenticeship.

**King's evil:** scrofula, a disease giving swollen glands in the neck, which was supposed to be cured by the royal touch. Ministers and churchwardens had to give sufferers a certificate stating that they had not previously been touched by the King before being allowed this 'cure', and some of the certificate records still survive in parish chests.

**Land Tax:** a tax on landowners levied from 1692 onwards. Assessments were usually made parish by parish, and give details of ownership, tenancies (if any), ratable value and amount of assessment. These can often be found in the appropriate county record office.

**Livery Company:** company of members of a specific trade who wore a special livery (uniform) and who ran special apprenticeship and other trade supervisory schemes. Prior to the nineteenth century anyone wishing to carry on a particular craft, or trade in the City of London had to be a member of the appropriate Livery Company.

**lives:** a term often found in land leases, 'three lives' being frequently used as an alternative for a ninety-nine year lease. If the three persons whose lives were named all died before the 89 years expired, the original owner could reclaim the land on the death of the third person. Alternatively the lessee could apply for a new lease on the death of one of the nominees, in which case a further fee was required.

**MI:** monumental inscription.

**manorial rolls:** records kept by the lord of the manor noting a variety of details including tenancy of land and rents payable, judgments of disputes brought before the manorial court, and inheritance of tenancies by heirs of the deceased tenants.

**maternal:** relating to the mothers side of the family.

**message:** a dwelling house with the outbuildings and lands pertaining to it.

**microfiche:** miniature cards, requiring a special magnifying reader, enabling a large amount of information to be stored in a very small space. The IGI (qv) is in microfiche format.

**monumental inscriptions:** general term covering gravestones, brass and stone plaques in chapels, etc.

**muster rolls:** lists of men, usually arranged by parish, who were eligible for military duty, with details of rank and type of service. The earliest known surviving roll is believed to be a fourteenth century one for the county of Norfolk, but most date from the reign of Henry VIII onwards.

**Nonconformist:** one who does not conform to the beliefs and practices of the established church of this country; a dissenter.

**nuncupative will:** a will made verbally, rather than in writing, in the presence of witnesses. These occur most frequently in military situations.

**PCC:** Prerogative Court of Canterbury (qv).

**PCY:** Prerogative Court of York (qv).

**PPR:** Principle Probate Registry (qv).

**PRO:** Public Record Office (qv).

**paleography:** the study of ancient handwriting, inscriptions, etc.

**parish chest:** large lockable chest usually kept in the church vestry in which all parish registers, accounts, settlement certificates, workhouse records etc were kept.

**paternal:** relating to the farther's side of the family.

**pauper:** poor person, usually supported by the poor relief rate of the parish.

**pedigree:** a genealogical table, sometimes written out, but often produced in the form of a chart.

**poor laws:** a series of Acts of Parliament, enacted between 1601 and 1834, dealing with the maintenance of the poor. The 1601 Act provided for the appointment of overseers to assist the churchwardens in providing work and support for the poor, and by 1662 they had the authority to remove any stranger back to his own parish unless he rented a property to the value of £10. See also settlement certificates.

**Prerogative Court of Canterbury:** the court of the Archbishop of Canterbury which had jurisdiction in the probate of wills of those people with property in more than one diocese of the province of Canterbury, or with property in both provinces (ie Canterbury and York). Many other wills were also proved in this court, the records of FCC probates (going back to 1383) being housed in the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane.

**Prerogative Court of York:** the court of the Archbishop of York which had jurisdiction in the probate of wills of people whose property lay in more than one diocese in the province of York. PCY wills from 1383 to 1858 are housed at the Borthwick Institute in York.

**Principal Probate Registry:** register of all wills proved and administrations granted since 1858, superceding the PCC and the PCY. An annual alphabetical index of surnames is provided, and this may be examined, at Somerset House. Copies of wills may be ordered for a small fee.

**Public Record Office:** the government office responsible for keeping all official records of the law courts, and state departments, including taxation, armed forces, census and population control, land registry, emigration and immigration, and many hundreds of others of great value to the historian. The main bulk of these records has been transferred to the new PRO building at Kew, but the census records remain in London.

**Recusants:** those who refused to acknowledge the authority of the Church of England following the break with the Roman Catholic Church by Henry VIII. Protestant clergy often made reports of recusants to the Bishops, and recusant rolls, listing the more flagrant and 'difficult' of these exist from the reigns of Elizabeth I to William and Mary.

**regnal year:** year beginning with the accession of a new sovereign. In early documents, dates are frequently expressed in this way, and a table of regnal years is most useful. For example, the reign of Queen Anne commenced on 8 March 1702, so the regnal year 7 Anne ran from 8 March 1708 to 7 March 1709.

**St Catherine's House:** home of the GRO in Kingsway, London WC2.

**settlement certificates:** a certificate required by an Act of 1697 for all people wishing to move from one parish to another. The certificate stated the original parish in which the newcomer had been settled and included a declaration that the authorities of that parish would accept him back at any time he became a burden on the community or proved undesirable in any way.

**sibling:** any child having the same parents as another, but not a twin.

**socage:** tenure of land or property by virtue of services rendered, as opposed to a tenancy held by payment of rent.

**sojourner:** temporary resident.

**Somerset House:** former London residence of the Earls of Somerset, and now partly a museum and partly government offices, including the Principal Probate Registry.

**subsidy rolls:** lists of persons assessed as being liable to pay a contribution towards the upkeep of the crown, up to the times of Charles II. The lists are arranged geographically and are divided into two sections, for laity and clergy.

**tenement:** any kind of permanent property, house or land, held by one person as tenant of another.

**testator:** maker of a will.

**tithe:** one tenth. Originally a tax of one tenth of a person's produce or income, payable in kind to the Church, but later used as a general term for local taxes paid in cash.

**tithe maps:** maps of all parishes dividing the total tax payable by each parish proportionately among owners of the property in that parish. Each field or property is numbered, and a corresponding list gives descriptions and amounts payable.

**transcript:** copy of an original document. See also Bishop's transcripts.

**unions:** groupings of parishes for the purpose of administering the poor laws more efficiently.

**visitation:** official or ceremonial visit, either heraldic or ecclesiastical. Heraldic visitations were tours by the Kings of Arms to record the pedigrees and arms of those families entitled to them, and to remove the arms of those using them without authority. These visitations occurred from 1530 to 1687. An ecclesiastical visitation was the first visit of a newly consecrated Bishop to any parish in his diocese, and visitation books record the orders he gave concerning the conduct of the parish, as well as noting the ordination dates of the deacons and priests.

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### 'Guide to Dartmoor'.

This is the title of a well known book written by Mr William Crossing and first published in 1906. A Mr Trevor James has been in contact with the society to find out more about Mr Crossing's wife who was named Emma Witheridge. He is writing an account of Mr William Crossing's life.

Emma (Jane) was born in Plymouth in 1847 to Richard and Jane Witheridge. Emma married William Crossing in 1872 at Ivybridge, her father was the manager of a local paper mill. In a census she was found visiting her grand-parents, Samuel and Jane Ryder of Ermington. Emma died in 1921 aged 74.

## Membership List

We welcome the following new members to the Society

- 063 Mr David L M Witheridge  
064 Mrs June Witheridge  
70 Copse Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon.  
1)David Leslie Mumford Witheridge; 2)Samuel Leslie Mumford Witheridge; 3)Gwendoline D Brown; 4)Philip Henry Witheridge 1873-1930; 5)Rhoda Adelaide Mumford 1876-1950; 8)Philip Witheridge 1831-1912; 9)Sarah Harding Ford 1834-1911; 16)Philip Witheridge 1791-1872; 17)Mary Northmore 1805-1880; 32)Arthur Witheridge 1758-1848; 33)Elizabeth Bowden 1762-1839.  
Ermington 1600-1925; Plympton and Plymouth 1925-1989.

## GRO Certificates Held

<u>Christian Names (s)</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Via</u>
<u>Birth</u>			
*John F	16.12.1869	Darlington, Ontario.	060
*Reginald Charles	07.01.1890	Bowmanville, Toronto.	060
*William Charles	25.08.1868	Darlington, Ontario.	060
<u>Marriage</u>			
*Reginald Charles	04.09.1912	Toronto.	060
*Richard	29.09.1885	Bowmanville, Toronto.	060
*William Charles	21.06.1889	Bowmanville, Toronto.	060
<u>Death</u>			
*Ann	20.12.1884	Darlington, Ontario.	060
*Ada	21.07.1946	Toronto.	060
*Christopher	04.03.1935	Toronto.	060
*George	18.04.1884	Toronto.	060
*George Verner	02.02.1941	Toronto.	060
*John	17.11.1915	Toronto.	060
*Mary Elizabeth	27.02.1985	Toronto.	060

\* Certificates marked thus were issued by the Office of the Registrar General in Toronto, Canada, and are not available from the GRO.

To order a copy of any certificates you need, send £1 per copy to Joyce Browne (address given inside front cover).

## Useful Addresses

Devon Record Office,  
Castle Street,  
Exeter,  
Devon.  
EX4 3PQ

Telephone 0392 53509

West Devon Record Office,  
Clare Place,  
Coxside,  
Plymouth,  
Devon.  
PL4 OJW

Telephone 0752 26485

North Devon Record Office,  
Tuly Street,  
Barnstaple,  
Devon.

Devon Family History Society,  
Membership Secretary,  
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Society of Genealogists,  
14 Charterhouse Buildings,  
London. EC1

Telephone 01-251 8799