

UIIATER 1991/92

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EDITORIAL

I begin this first editorial of 1992 with three appeals:-

One is for items for the magazine - profiles of relatives, family news, queries, articles - all would be welcome. The second appeal is for items for the 'cook book' which June Witheridge agreed to edit and publish. June is still waiting for these recipes to arrive - so please all you cooks, let us know what Witheridges like to eat (and drink). Please send your recipes to: -

> Mrs. June Witheridge, 70 Copse Road, Plympton, PLYMOUTH, Devon PL7 30B

The third appeal is to make sure that you have noted the date of our Annual General Meeting which is incorporated in 'Witheridge Day'. The meeting is to be held at the Village Hall, Alderton, Gloucestershire, on Monday, 4th May, 1992.

Our Secretary, John Witheridge, would welcome any suggestions for the programme for this, our fifth gathering. Please send them to him at the address inside the front cover.

The year 1991 saw changes for our officers, some of whom have taken on new roles, and all of whom are trying to promote the Society's interests as time goes on. Richard Witheridge joined the Devon Family History Society on our behalf, and John Witheridge is dealing with all the secretarial work connected with our affiliation to the Guild of One Name Studies. We hope that these two ventures will bear fruit in the way of information and interest to us in 1992.

After a year in which we saw the joy of hostages re-united with their families, and the misery of families shattered by war, we pray for a peaceful year ahead, and send greetings to all our family members, and good wishes for a happy 1992.

Joyce

Family news

We are sorry to hear that Elizabeth Witheridge of Minneapolis, U.S.A., has had a bad fall and has suffered a broken hip. She is now convalescing in a Nursing Home in Minneapolis, and our best wishes for a speedy recovery go to her, and our thoughts to her husband David, with hopes that he continues to be in good health.

Since our last report, three of our members have been in hospital. Kim Cook has had abdominal surgery, and is making a good, if painful recovery. Harry Payne, in Cheltenham, had had an operation on his eye, with good result, and Bob Thomas, in the the Isle-of-Man, is recovering from surgery on his hip.

We wish them all a speedy return to full health.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Our best wishes to Jason Cook in his remove to:-

2 Rusthall Close, Addiscombe, CROYDON, Surrey CRO 7YH

"LOST" - ALICE TAMLIN WITHERIDGE

The Parish Register of Ermington records Banns called for the marriage of Alice Tamlin and John Witheridge, in April,1755, but no marriage is recorded. Subsequently, Alice appears in other records as the wife and widow of John, and the mother of his children, Mary, born 1757, and Arthur, born 1758. I have been unable to find a birth record for Alice in Ermington, or in nearby parishes. Her date of birth is presumed to be circa 1730. Has anyone come across this name in their researches?

"FOUND"

Since writing of her experiences in trying to trace the date of the change of name in the Austin/Beech family, Kathy Witheridge, Ontario, has received information which reveals that the name "Beech" was known in the family in 1904, before they left for Canada. This does not solve the mystery, but it is a significant clue.

A CAUTIONARY TALE

By Annette Witheridge

I always thought I had the Witheridge "market" tapped ,anyone who heard a mere mention of our name always let me know. But my spies and I managed to miss out on a whole series of small advertisements placed in the Birmingham Post and the London Gazette asking for any relatives of the late William Witheridge to come forward.

The first I knew of it was when I got a 'phone call out of the blue from a genealogy researcher claiming that he knew something that was of interest to me. Intrigued, I invited him round.

He was terribly vague, saying that he couldn't tell me who had died, or how much money there was until I signed a form agreeing to give him a quarter of it. I declined to sign there and then, and being the journalist that I am, I managed to work out that the deceased was probably my long lost uncle, Bill. One thing puzzled me though, I knew uncle Bill had made a will some 12 years previously leaving everything to my late father. Yet here was this man, who had traced me via my birth certificate and an old neighbour, telling me he hadn't left a will.

The quest for the truth was difficult - the genealogy man would give me no details on anything. We had no idea when uncle Bill had died, when the adverts had been placed, or who the solicitors were. I tried my family's lawyers - they had no will registered. I called up my contacts on the Birmingham Post, but they hadn't time to scour too many small adverts. I also had no idea where uncle Bill lived.

My sister, Yvonne, who really should be the family's investigative journalist, then set to work on finding out what had happened. Sue looked in the Birmingham telephone directory and there was uncle Bill's number. More incredibly, he lived next door to a friend of Yvonne's who had no idea of her maiden name. Yvonne, who had actually visited her friend's house on numerous occasions, got on the 'phone.

It turned out that uncle Bill had died in hospital 12 months previously. The house was up for sale and every weekend an elderly couple had been seen clearing out books, papers and ornaments. Through the estate agents I contacted the solicitors and gradually the story began to unfold. It appeared that a very distant relative (one half of the mysterious elderly couple seen at the house) had registered herself as next of kin and was claiming to be uncle Bill's sole surviving relative.

The solicitors were suspicious, especially when she let slip that she had brothers and sisters of her own still living. She also claimed that uncle Bill's three brothers and one sister had all died without marrying. Not quite believing her story, the solicitors placed the newspaper adverts - the result was utter silence. By this time the solicitors had handed over the keys of the house to the distant relative but were still worried.

They called in a genealogy research company and it took around two days to locate me. The researcher headed for St. Catherine's House, found my parents' marriage certificate, and my birth certificate. A quick call to the house where I was born put him in touch with the neighbour who gave him my 'phone number.

I must admit I spent the weeks of our own investigation in a daze - and received several marriage proposals from unsuitable men who were under the impression I might become a wealthy heiress!

We finally got to see the solicitor and then went to visit the house. Just a few sticks of furniture remained. The kitchen was full of sacks of opened mail, carpets had been pulled up, and the vent to the attic was wide open. The house bore all the hallmarks of someone who had been searching for something. Sadly there wasn't a document or a family photograph left, which puzzled me as uncle Bill was a great hoarder.

We did actually find out the address of our mysterious distant relative. We didn't visit. I got the impression she didn't want to see us. The solicitors asked her to return anything she had taken from the house. They heard nothing more.

I also discovered from the neighbours that uncle Bill, an eccentric recluse at the best of times, had never had visitors. So it wasn't as if she'd looked after him in his final days.

We got our inheritance (the genealogy researchers, lawyers and estate agents also got a pretty considerable chunk of it). The money was great - the sad thing is that another valuable part of my family history has been lost. I think there are probably a few morals here as well:-

- 1. Scour the newspaper small advertisements
- When you make a will make sure you lodge it somewhere safe - and
- Track down ageing relatives and ask them about the family.

PPR WILLS AND ADMONS

Witheridge and Variants

- 1960 Witheridge, Bernard, otherwise Bernard Ewart or Chapell, Charles, of 50A Plain-an-Gwarry, Redruth, Cornwall, died 4 April, 1960, (age 64). Admon 28 June to Hilda Thomas Witheridge and Norah Kathleen Witheridge, spinsters.
- 1961 Witheridge, Mabel Ethel Mary Jane, otherwise Mabel Ethel, of 116, High Street, Delabole, Cornwall, widow, died 23 February, 1961 (age 75). Admon Bodmin 29 March to Ida Cecilia Prout (wife of Francis John Prout).
- 1962 <u>Witheridge, James</u>, of 40 Eva Road, Birmingham 18, died 5 May, 1962 (age 79). Probate to Ada Elizabeth Witheridge, widow.
- 1963 <u>Witheridge, William James</u>, of 19 Delamere Road, Austin Farm, Plymouth, died 8th February 1953, at Greenbank Hospital, Plymouth (age 58). Admon 20 March to Edith Witheridge, widow.

Research Report

By Philip Henry Witheridge

My own branch of the Ermington Witheridges came to the midlands early in the second world war. My father, a serving airman, was posted to RAF Hednesford near Rugeley, in Staffordshire, and our family followed him, moving into 11 Birch Avenue in Cannock. We soon realised that we were not the only Witheridges in the midlands. From time to time we would see reports of a policeman, with our surname, in the local papers.

We now know that there were a considerable number of Witheridges in the midlands, from at least two of our major family lines. Besides the Ermington line, we also have the Rochester line, which came from Kent via London to Birmingham and then spread out around the midlands.

In this report I wish to concentrate on the Ermington Witheridges who came to Walsall, but as you will see, it is difficult not to mention the others. In the centre fold is the family tree giving the descendants of William Bowden Witheridge, millwright, who moved out of his birthplace, Ermington, and went to Plymouth.

William Bowden Witheridge married twice, the second marriage was to Mary Wills in 1818, and resulted in the birth of two sons, whose descendants remained in and around Plymouth. Today, there are no descendants of this branch, that we know of, who still use our surname.

The record of William Bowden Witheridge's first marriage has not been found. We know that he married Elizabeth, and that they had children. Only the first born, Abel, a stonemason, survived to marry Emily Blake and have three children, and only one of their children, a boy, survived and fathered another generation.

Abel's son was William Moses Bowden Witheridge, a blacksmith, who moved to Walsall and married a widow, Emma Garrington. William and Emma had three children. Their second child, Abel Witheridge, a railway vanman, married Ellen Teece, a tailoress, and it is their marriage photograph which is included in this article. It is their daughter, Bessie, who is now a member of our society, and who came to meet us on Witheridge Day, 1991. Bessie has also met a number of other Witheridges over the years, including the Rev. David Witheridge of Minneapolis.

During the war, Bessie was in the A.T.S. , and rose to the

ERMINGTON - PLYMOUTH - WALSALL



rank of sergeant-major. Afterwards she continued to work as a civilian pay clerk for the Territorial Army, and in this role she attended camps with the Unit she supported. On one of these camps, at Castlemartin in Wales, a Colonel George Witheridge was the camp commandant. Although she tried to make contact at that time, Bessie was not successful. Some time later she came across an advertisement in 'The Lady' magazine offering a caravan to let, which had been inserted by Col. George from Kilgetty, South Wales. With her brother and a friend, Bessie called on and met Col. George and his wife, Mary. The Colonel was retired at that time, and had a mink farm. During the visit Bessie remembers being shown a silver model Tank which was presented to Col. George on his retirement, and a brooch in the form of a mink's tail which Mary wore when Col. George went to Buckingham Palace to be presented with an honour, possibly the O.B.E?

The late Colonel George Witheridge of the Tank Corps, bc1908 was the eldest son of Beauchamp Henry Witheridge, b1884, and the grandson of George Witheridge, b1840 and his wife Dorcas Mary, nee Hammett. These are ancestors of another member - Philip Hookway. This family's origins are in Kingsbridge, south Devon.

Bessie's father, Abel, worked on the railways and regularly received items dispatched by rail addressed to him. Everyone on that rail system knew him by name. One day he received a box of plums. As Bessie was away he thought she had sent them, and so he bottled some, jammed some and ate the rest. On Bessie's return it was realised that they were not meant for Abel. They were intended for another Mr. A. Witheridge - Arthur Witheridge of the Rochester family line who also lived in Walsall. Abel cycled the four miles across Walsall to apologise and replace the plums, but Arthur Witheridge was furious.

This was not the only contact with this other Witheridge line. Bessie's brother was named Leslie Richard, as was Arthur's son, and there was some confusion later because the two boys had the same name.

During the first world war Bessie's father Abel was a special constable. At the end of the war he was presented, as were all the other 'specials' with a presentation truncheon and a medal. However, the truncheon was stolen from a friend's house, but Bessie still has the medal.

Bessie is a championship show judge for the Corgi dog breed, and has judged at almost all the country' top dog shows, including Cruft's. Before you ask, let me tell you that she does not rub shoulders with H.M! The Queen has Pembroke corgis which are smaller and do not have tails. Bessie judges Cardigan corgis which have long tails and are bigger.

Unfortunately, it looks as if we shall lose sight of this family, as there are only girls born in the most recent generation. What a shame!



OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

By John Witheridge

Do you ever sit back and dream about the days gone by wondering about our ancestors, what they were like, and what sort of things they would be doing on an average day? I have been encouraged to dream with the aid of someone to whom I have been writing. He is a Mr.A.J.C.Taylor, a member of the Guild of One Name Studies.

In my dream it is not quite an average day, for I am at a wedding. The year is 1607, the month is November, and the day is the 23rd. The bride is walking down the aisle on the arm of her relative, Robert Edgecombe. All the village has turned out for this occasion, and every one is wishing her happiness. Later we hear the words ".... do you Johane, take this man Arthure...?" But Arthure Witheridge could not have known what he was taking on when he took Johane Edgecombe as his bride.

Yes, I am in Ermington, and I can hear friends say to Johane "What a pity your parents did not live to see this day." Alas, Thomas Edgecombe and his wife did not live to see their daughter's wedding. Thomas had died in 1604 and his wife some time earlier, and Johane had been living with her Edgecombe relatives since she lost her parents.

Robert Edgecombe was possibly Johane's cousin, and Johane could have been like a sister to Robert's older children by his first wife, Mary. By the time of Johane's wedding Robert was already married, to his second wife, Bridget, whose maiden name we do not know. Robert and Mary had three children, and he and Bridget had seven more. The three by his first wife were Mary, Elizabeth and John. Bridget's children were John, Thomas, Bridget, Oliver, Dorytye, Agnes and Joan, Dorytye married Johane's son, Thomas Witheridge, in 1637.

The Edgecombes had been living at Ermington for many years. Records show that a John Edgecombe paid taxes in 1524, and the list for the year 1544 also shows a John Edgecombe paying taxes. We know that about this time a John Edgecombe had three sons, Henry, John and Hugh, and he may have had others - a Thomas Edgecombe and a Francis Edgecombe were also paying taxes in 1544. Robert Edgecombe's father was a John Edgecombe.

In the year 1580 Robert Edgecombe married Mary Carswell Fountain, but she died in 1597, and in that same year her only son, John, also died. Three years later Robert married Bridget.

During the reign of King James I, 1603-1625, a Sergeant-at-Arms, a William Fountain, died - whether or not on campaign we do not know. He had no wife or children, and no male heir, and so his large estates were divided between his three sisters. Mary Carswell Fountain Edgecombe was the oldest of those sisters. The three sisters should have inherited all, but as Mary had died in 1597, her two daughters shared her portion of the inheritance.

The older of these two girls had married a John Reynolds (in 1617) and in 1630 he also died leaving all the property he and his wife had gained to their son, William. As William was not old enough to manage his own affairs, Robert Edgecombe and Arthure Witheridge were appointed as his Trustees. Although Robert held the purse strings he entrusted all the day to day management of the property to Arthure.

All was not plain sailing, however, as a Thomas Williams of Stowford contested the wardship, and Arthure had to raise a loan to fight off his claim. The loan was of £50.0s.0d. from a Mrs. Penhay, and was secured by a bond against the Reynolds' estate. It was left to Arthure to fight this battle in the courts on his own.

When young William Reynolds came of age he was presented with the accounts, and it seems that he was very pleased with Arthure's management as the estate had profited to the tune of over £1000.0s.0d., but he was not very happy when he found that debts of some £240.0s.0d., from the years following his father's death were still unpaid.

To crown this situation, the bond for the loan had not been redeemed. In fact this bond was not redeemed during Robert Edgecombe's lifetime, even after several court actions in which Mrs. Penhay strove to recover her overdue payment.

During ail this upheaval Arthurs Witheridge died, leaving the proceedings in turmoil. The loan was finally repaid by Robert's daughter-in-law, Alice, who, to end the wrangle paid the money herself. No one could dispute her right to do this as she was the legal head of the section of the family concerned, and was paying taxes as "... the widow Edgecombe". It seems that Arthure Witheridge was a champion to the Edgecombes in fighting their legal battles, and who better to strengthen him than the lady at his side, Johane Edgecombe Witheridge?

There are more stories of interest from this era, and if you will permit me, who knows - I may dream again.

" BEING OF SOUND MIND"

By Joyce Browne

An air raid on Exeter in May, 1942, wrecked the city, caused tragic loss of life, and from the point of view of the family historian, a tragic loss when many of the City's archives went up in flames, including hundreds of years of Devon Wills. Nevertheless, some records remain, many only indexes of what had been, and some Wills which were not in the Central Archives.

Recently, at the local Family History Centre of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, I searched a micro-film entitled "Devon Court Records", which I had thought to be a record of magisterial proceedings, but which turned out to be a record of Devon Wills. This film is in alphabetical sections and I looked at Film No. 916900 E-F (looking for Edgecombes) and No. 916913 (looking for Witheridge and variants). Although I gained little in the way of Witheridge information, I caught glimpses of bygone family life and sensed the sadness and bitterness of some of the testators as they made their last dispositions. A number of them mistrusted their children, particularly sons. The alienation of the young from an older generation is no new thing it seems.

What would you make of this in the Will of John Eedes, 1691. to my son, Nicholas, 10s.0d., and forgive him £20.0s.0d., which he borrowed off me."

Or this, in the Will of John Elford of Plymouth, 1731 and in case my eldest or other sons shall refuse to be bred to such trade or profession as my kinsman, Jonathan Elford, shall think expedient, such sons shall forfeit all therein given to them, to their brothers."

John Eastmonde of Dorset evidently thought he had insight into the character of his eldest son when in his Will of

the year 1658 he said "My debts to be paid and any overplus to remain to my younger children. I have sold divers trees on my land in Fyffhead Magdalen; my eldest sonne, on whom I have settled a faire estate, is not to hinder those who have bought them from having them."

Thomas Wade of Topsham was to have £30.0s.0d., a year from the estate of his father Henrye Wade " to be void if he tries to alienate it."

The Will of Francis Estcott of Barnstaple was one of the saddest and most vitriolic. Made on the 4th July, 1722 evidently his wedding anniversary and the day of his wife's death after 38 years of marriage, his Will says "... which is the most sorrowful day I ever saw whereas the same day in the year 1684 was the most joyful to me, but having seen this day, most sad and dismal spectacle of mortality in Philippa my dear and beloved wife... I heartily wish I had not lived to see this day." He goes on - "My estate not so great as I might have had if I had been more careful, and not met with so many great losses and Crosses, besides a numerous family." "To my undutiful son, John, although he hath been a great trouble and affliction to me and his mother, £100.0s.0d." (Other children received £200.0s.0d.)

Matters must have gone from bad to worse, as on the 18th March, 1724, Frances Estcott made a Codicil:

"My daughter Mary to have only £150.0s.0d., to be put with the other legacies. My son John to have only £50.0s.0d., by £5.0s.0d., a year. It would appear that Francis Estcott lived for another eight years, as his Will was proved in 1732/3.

His son, Francis, inherited trouble along with his portion. The ready cash of his father's estate was not sufficient to meet the bequests, and one of Francis's sisters, Philippa Estcott, and a brother-in-law, William Lambert, went to law, and land and property which Francis had expected to come to him had to be sold. In his own Will he commented about the sale and confirmation a Chancery Suit was commenced. prosecuted and determined, but to the great detriment and irretrievable loss, cost, damages, to me and all my sisters. Because of which I declare I have put to my other sisters their shares, and a considerable sum more to the said Philippa Estcott, and William Lambert late deceased husband of Elizabeth Estcott a considerable sum more (prest and intreated thereto at the violent instrigation of the said Philippa Estcott) and now to my loss." His brother John's portion sank to f5.0s.0d. I hadn't expected to actually read a Will where someone was cut off with a shilling, but I did when I saw the last testament of Samuel Wood of Topsham, made 1667. He left £1000.0s.0d., a house and fields to his son John, £50.0s.0d., each to his daughters "in addition to their portion", and ".... to my daughter Elizabeth, now the unhappy wife of Edward White, ls.0d."

Forty two years previously, in 1625, a Marie Wade received from Edward Wade of Bundry "10s.0d., and the outside of a pare of old breeches to make her a coat." One wonders who was to have the inside?

More pleasantly, in 1603, William Farleigh a Yeoman of Ugborough, mentions his wife and mother and says that they were to be provided for with "meat, drink and wearing apparel, and attendance in sickness and in health, and a horse to ryde at all times and seasons convenient to ryde."

The only mention of Witheridges on this film were meagre references to a Samuel Witheridge of Bradworthy, and an Edward Witheridge of Lymehouse. In 1680 Samuel witnessed a Nuncupative (verbal) Will made by Elias Eastway who had been Vicar of Bradworthy. Perhaps Samuel was a Churchwarden in Bradworthy?

The Will of Edward Witheridge of Lymehouse (presumably East London), a Mariner, was proved in 1697. He was evidently a Devon man with land or property in East Healland, Fremington, and in his Will he referred to "my daughter Wilmot Terry and her children named", and "my daughter Rachel Stacey, widow."

I thought the Will likely to have the happiest outcome was made by Edward Elston of "Strutton Major in King and Queen County in the Government or Virginia", and proved 23rd January, 1720. "To my brother William Elston of St. Sidwell's in Exon, Sergemaker, all my Plantation in Strutton Major containing 300 acres of ground purchased by my Uncle, Robert Yard, Gent, and now in my possession"

"My negro called Nanny who has been very 'tractable' and has by her care preserved her master in many contagious sicknesses, and her daughter named Cock, to be set free from slavery immediately upon the Probate of my Will."

I like to think that Nanny and her daughter were given their freedom, and did not go away empty handed.

IISEFIII. ADDRESSES Devon Record Office (Tel.No. 0392-53509) Castle Street, Exeter, Devon EX4 3PO West Devon Record Office, (Tel.No. 0752-26495) Clare Place, Coxside, Plymouth, Devon PL4 OJW North Devon Record Office, Tuly Street, Barnstaple, Devon Devon Family History Society, Membership Secretary, Mrs. P. Witwicka, 4a Cookworthy Road, North Prospect, Plymouth, Devon, PL2 2LP Society of Genealogists, (Tel.No. 01-251-8799) 14 Charterhouse Buildings, London E.C.T. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS Federation of Family History Societies Family History News and Digest UK £1.90 Overseas £2.20 Airmail £3.25 Forming a One Name Group UK £1.50 Overseas £1.65 Airmail £1.95 Order from:-Federation Postal Sales Dept., FFHS Publications, C/o Bensom Rood, Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Sreet, BIRMINGHAM, B3 3BS Cheques payable: Federation Family History Societies Guild of One Name Studies Register of One Name Studies UK £3.00 Overseas £3.25 Airmail £4.20 UK £3.50 Overseas £3.25 Surname Periodicals Airmail £4.55 Organising a One Name Gathering UK £1.35 Overseas £1.55 Airmail £1.95 Record Keeping for a One Name UK £1.90 Overseas £2.10 Study Airmail £2.40 Order: Mr. J.R. Hebden, Aldergarth, Galphay, RIPON, North Yorkshire. HG4 3NJ Cheques payable to: - Guild of One Name Studies