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E D I T O R I A L

Christmas and New Year Greetings to all our readers!

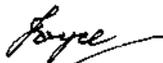
It seems but twelve minutes instead of twelve months since I was writing the editorial for the Winter magazine. Editing the magazine is full of interest and anticipation, one never knows what is going to come up in the way of contributions or what titbit of information is going to emerge, and each scrap helps to bring to life a character who had previously been but a name on a family tree.

We try to publish items which will be of interest to readers no matter where they may be, and we now make our usual appeal for members to share with us their articles, comments and research information.

One good thing about having a comparatively unusual name is that, unlike the Smiths (or Browne's!), any item of Witheridge information on a page is likely to stand out to our researchers - so keep looking in 1996!

I would like to give my thanks to everyone who has made a contribution in 1995 - and to everyone who has taken the time to read our magazine!

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year!



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Christmas has come upon us again and again it is time for my Christmas message to all Witheridges wherever they may be. Nineteen ninety five has been a good year for the Society, and once again a great deal of investigation and research has been carried out.

This year, at the Annual General Meeting, we were pleased to see old friends, and to have the company of Kathy Witheridge from Ontario. Later in the year we met Mavis Witheridge from Western Australia, who gave us a very entertaining account of her early life, and her contacts with her husband's Witheridge relations.

We look forward to meeting more members in 1996 - meanwhile, Season's Greetings to you all!



ELIZABETH WITHERIDGE - an appreciation of a remarkable lady

by Kim Cook

Elizabeth Witheridge, wife of the Rev. David Witheridge of Minneapolis, and mother of Jim and Tom, died peacefully in the Walker Methodist Health Centre in Minneapolis on 8th August, 1995. Her long and remarkable life was one of tremendous achievement in the most quiet and unassuming way, and I hope, through this article, to be able to share with those of you who did not know Elizabeth, something of her life and character.

Elizabeth was raised in Saginaw, Michigan, where she spent most of her childhood in the care of her grandparents on their farm. From her earliest days she had a strong Christian faith and a great love and concern for children two attributes that were to be the markers of her life.

After leaving school Elizabeth trained as a kindergarten (primary school) teacher, graduating from Central Michigan University. She taught for 13 years in Saginaw. In 1941 she married David, whom she had known since childhood, as they were both members of the same church. At the time of their marriage, David was a heating, ventilation and air conditioning engineer.

Later, when David gave up engineering to train as a Baptist minister, Elizabeth also took courses at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. After graduating from divinity college, David became a pastor in Illinois, where they lived for nine years before, in 1951, moving to Minneapolis where David became Executive Director of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches.

As well as bringing up their two sons, Jim and Tom, Elizabeth fulfilled all the duties expected of a pastor's wife - and more. Her rapport with children made her a natural Sunday School teacher. She led the children's choir, and served on many church committees involved in caring for the disadvantaged. In particular, she had a great concern for the plight of the American Indians, being heavily involved with the Division of Indian Work of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches. In everything she did, she showed great concern for the welfare of others.

In addition to all this, Elizabeth somehow found time to write a succession of books for children. The first 'Mara of Old Babylon' published in 1955, was the story of a child

in Biblical times. This was followed by 'Mara Journeys Home' and, in complete contrast, 'Jim Penney's Golden Nugget', based on the life of one of her ancestors in the days of the gold rush.

All Elizabeth's books were based on fact, and many recounted events that she had experienced herself, or circumstances she had encountered in her welfare work. Throughout her writings, Elizabeth tackled real social issues in a way that children could understand and relate to, and her books are full of her gentle wisdom. All her books were meticulously researched, and in an interview after the publication of one of them, she insisted that "books for children should be historically accurate. Such great harm can be done by giving them wrong information".

'Dead End Bluff', which recounted the experiences of a blind boy, won a national award. Much of Elizabeth's own childhood is recalled in 'Never Younger, Jeannie', (published in 1963), a book she dedicated to the memory of her grandparents, while 'Just One Indian Boy', (published in 1974) was based on the lives of young Native Americans (as they now prefer to be called) on a reservation in northern Minnesota. I treasure the copies of these two books given me by Elizabeth.

On the fly-leaf of 'Just One Indian Boy', Elizabeth wrote the following inscription:

'One Indian boy growing up read this book and said to his mother, "I've read this book three times, and it's the best book I have ever read!" As its author, I am pleased beyond words that it has fulfilled the purpose that I dreamed for it!'

Even though she was no longer in full-time teaching, Elizabeth continued to be involved with children's education. She travelled widely, visiting schools to speak about her books, and to encourage children both to think carefully about the issues they raised, and to consider writing their own experiences. Her visits to schools were greeted with enormous enthusiasm by the young pupils, who loved her dearly, and would string banners of welcome across the school entrance. Such tokens of esteem always surprised and delighted Elizabeth, who never saw herself as anyone special, even when others did.

Elizabeth's care and concern for others was always very practical, and she campaigned for many causes in support of

the disadvantaged, particularly among ethnic minorities. Without succumbing to the aggression so prevalent among the campaigners of today, Elizabeth quietly and firmly stood her ground on issues of injustice and inequality.

Elizabeth's ancestry was predominantly English (Plumb, Gilbert, Kendall and Baldwin featured in her family tree) and her ancestors had been among the very earliest American colonists. Some had fought for freedom in the American War of Independence in 1776. This ancestry entitled Elizabeth to the highly prized accolade of membership of the prestigious organisation 'Daughters of the American Revolution'. But when the DAR refused to allow the renowned black singer Marion Anderson to sing in their august halls, Elizabeth did what to many people was unthinkable - she resigned her membership. She was not alone, however, because Eleanor Roosevelt did likewise. The political climate has, thankfully, changed considerably since then, but in those days Elizabeth's action was a bold and courageous step.

Our family's first contact with David and Elizabeth came in the 1960s, when David wrote to all the Witheridges he could find in the UK telephone directories. One of these was my aunt Dorothy. Unable to get up to London herself, and knowing that I had already done some work on the family tree, she commissioned me to do some further research so that we could answer David's questions about our branch of the family. From my reply to that letter grew a correspondence and a friendship that continue to this day.

In the early days, most of the letters were about family history and were written by David. However, when our elder son, Jason was born in 1968, he was diagnosed as having a rare digestive problem for which the prognosis was not good. During Jason's illness there were long gaps between my letters, and eventually I wrote and explained the situation. By return of post we received two lovely letters, one from David, the other from Elizabeth. In her letter, Elizabeth explained that their son Tom had also been born with a similar condition, so she knew and understood our anxieties. Her letter was full of practical sympathy, warmth and above all encouragement, and it lightened those dark days. Thereafter, Elizabeth would always add her own personal messages to David's letters, and we felt that they were both our dearest friends, even though at that stage we had never met.

We eventually met for the first time when David and Elizabeth first came to the UK in June 1976. They arrived just in time to be guests of honour at our church's supper

to celebrate the American Bicentenary. It was only after the supper that I learned how appropriate the occasion was for Elizabeth! Later, we celebrated the Fourth of July with tea in an English garden, ending with what was then, to us, the novelty of water ice. Elizabeth was thrilled for (unknown to us) water ice had been a traditional ingredient of her childhood Fourth of July celebrations!

On that first visit, David and Elizabeth stayed in the UK for three months, combining visits to British Councils of Churches with family history research and holiday. They met many Witheridges in their travels, and I particularly remember a wonderful day we all spent with Anthony and Francoise Witheridge and their four young children together with Anthony's father, George and his wife Gwen, at their home on an Army base in Kent. As always, Elizabeth took great pleasure in having so many youngsters around her.

As David and Elizabeth shared our interests in history, and in plants and flowers, Hampton Court and Kew Gardens were on the agenda. We were disappointed with Kew, looking (as we thought) very sad and brown in that famous 'summer of the drought' (so like this one!) but Elizabeth loved it. Throughout their travels and visits, Elizabeth, despite being nearly 70, never flagged. All through that heat, however busy she was, however tight their schedule, Elizabeth remained calm and unflappable. I often wished I could emulate her easy efficiency and even temperament. And every evening she wrote up her journal, recording the experiences of their visit. I wondered if she might find the ingredients for another book in that journal.

David and Elizabeth made two further visits to the UK, in 1980 and 1988, and then in 1990 welcomed us most warmly to their home in Minneapolis, where we got to know the whole family. With her continuing love of children, it was natural that Elizabeth was particularly devoted to her grand-daughter Rebecca, daughter of Tom and his wife Virginia. Even though by then we could see the early signs of the Alzheimer's disease that was to develop during those last five years, her natural rapport with children was still very evident.

Here we also saw further evidence of the love of plants that David and Elizabeth shared. In the house, Elizabeth had a wonderful collection of African violets, which she grew and tended herself. In the garden we enjoyed their beautiful rose bed - a delight of colour and scent. Nothing unusual in that you may think - until you remember that after summer





**Elizabeth P. Witheridge**  
**1907 - 1995**

THE SOUTH HUISH/SOUTH MILTON/YEALMPTON FAMILY

by Joyce Browne and Philip Witheridge

Although it is eight years (Magazine Autumn/Winter 1987) since Kim's article on the Yealampton family appeared in the magazine, it should not be supposed that there has been no interest in what we are now calling the South Huish, South Milton and Yealampton family.

For a long time we have been searching parish registers, looking over documents and sifting the evidence, and now we think that we can go back in time for three generations from the head of the original family tree.

In chronological order the first piece of evidence is a lease of the year 1687 for land in the Manor of Churchstow - 'tenement and three and a half acres'. Walter Witheridge, of West Alvington, husbandman, was granted a sub lease of this land which was in the tenure of James, George and Matthew Bevill, and their sister Joan Hurrell, and terminable on the deaths of this family. (Original lease granted in 1662 for 99 years).

A search of the West Alvington parish registers revealed births of four children to a John Witheridge, 1564 - 1585, but no Walter. There are no more Witheridge births until the year 1728 - but then there are lengthy gaps in the recording of events in West Alvington. At the moment, then, we must place Walter at the head of his family tree.

By the year 1713 it would appear that some of the Bevill family had died, as the lease on the 'tenement and three and a half acres' reverts to Walter Witheridge of South Huish, husbandman. It has one 'life' named in the reversion, that of William, 'the lessee's son'.

Our search for this family now extended to South Huish, and from this the tree begins to grow. In 1694 and 1696 respectively, William and Sarah were baptised, son and daughter of Walter and Sarah Witheridge. We now know that Walter's wife was named 'Sarah' but so far a 'trawl' of parishes round about has failed to find their marriage. All we know about Sarah is as the mother of William and Sarah, and a record of a burial at South Huish on 17th October, 1725 of 'Sarah Witheridge, widow'.

Although Walter was the tenant of the Churchstow land, this was evidently not sufficient to be the livelihood of his

son, William. In 1712 William Walter Witheridge of South Huish, Devon, was bound as an apprentice to Thomas Pinwill of Malborough, a cooper, in the sum of £14.00.0d.

It is likely that Walter died circa 1720. We know that his wife Sarah was a widow when she died in 1725. His son William married Margery Tanner in South Huish on the 24th November, 1720. Was this made possible because William had just come out of his apprenticeship, and his father had died leaving him with an income from the Churchstow property?

William was not able to enjoy this property for long. Another document of the 16th April, 1730 reveals that the lease on the premises had reverted 'on death of George Bevill, Labourer, and William Witheridge, of South Milton, Yeoman'. It also give details of the property: 'tenement and three and a half acres, i.e., the orchard one acre, two closes called Boveways two acres, and little Park half acre, in the possession of George Burner.'

William's status had improved on that of his father. A yeoman had to be in possession of free land of at least 40s. annual value, had to serve on juries, and take other civic responsibilities. This lease also showed that we had to move our search from South Huish to South Milton, and this we did.

The South Milton registers record the baptism of a Walter Witheridge to William and Margery on the 16th September, 1733, (see third generation family tree), but no son William prior to that, but the register is endorsed 'No account kept 1717 - 1733'. That might account for the lack of entry for the birth of William, but does it account for Walter? To all appearances, if normal baptismal procedure was followed, Walter was born three years after his father had died!

We pondered long over this, and put forward the thought that, as the lease of April 1730 states that William was dead, was his child Walter newly born, or born shortly after William's death? William's widow, Margery, could have been in a state of grief and shock, after all her husband could not have been more than 35 years old. Did she neglect to Christen the baby until he was about three years old? Not impossible!

Another thought occurred - as no record was kept in the parish of South Milton between the years 1717-1733, was the church without a Vicar, or did some state of disagreement exist between the clergy and the parishioners?

Back to William, junior, born circa 1725. He married Mary Godwill of Aveton Gifford at South Milton in 1753, and they had a son, William, baptised at South Milton on 15th June, 1766. Were there no children before this? The South Milton registers give us no record. They do show that 'William a child' was buried in 1772.

There were two more burials recorded for 'William', one in 1776 and one in 1782. We think the first date is more likely to be the one for William, husband of Mary Godwill, and as far as we know, his line from Walter, born circa 1665, husbandman of West Alvington, ends there.

The family line does continue through Walter, born 1733, the first Walter's grandson.

The search for this family moves its area again, as we discover children born to a Walter and Elizabeth at Sherford: William, baptised 1770, Elizabeth baptised 1773, and Walter and Sarah, baptised 1774 ? twins.

At the back of our minds was our knowledge of three brothers, John, James and William Witheridge, who leased a tenement in Newton Ferrers in 1789. Kim drew our attention to this in her original article in the magazine of Autumn, 1987, and in her article on Wills in the magazine of Summer 1990 she elaborated on the wording of the lease, and connected the three brothers to the Witheridges of Kingsbridge.

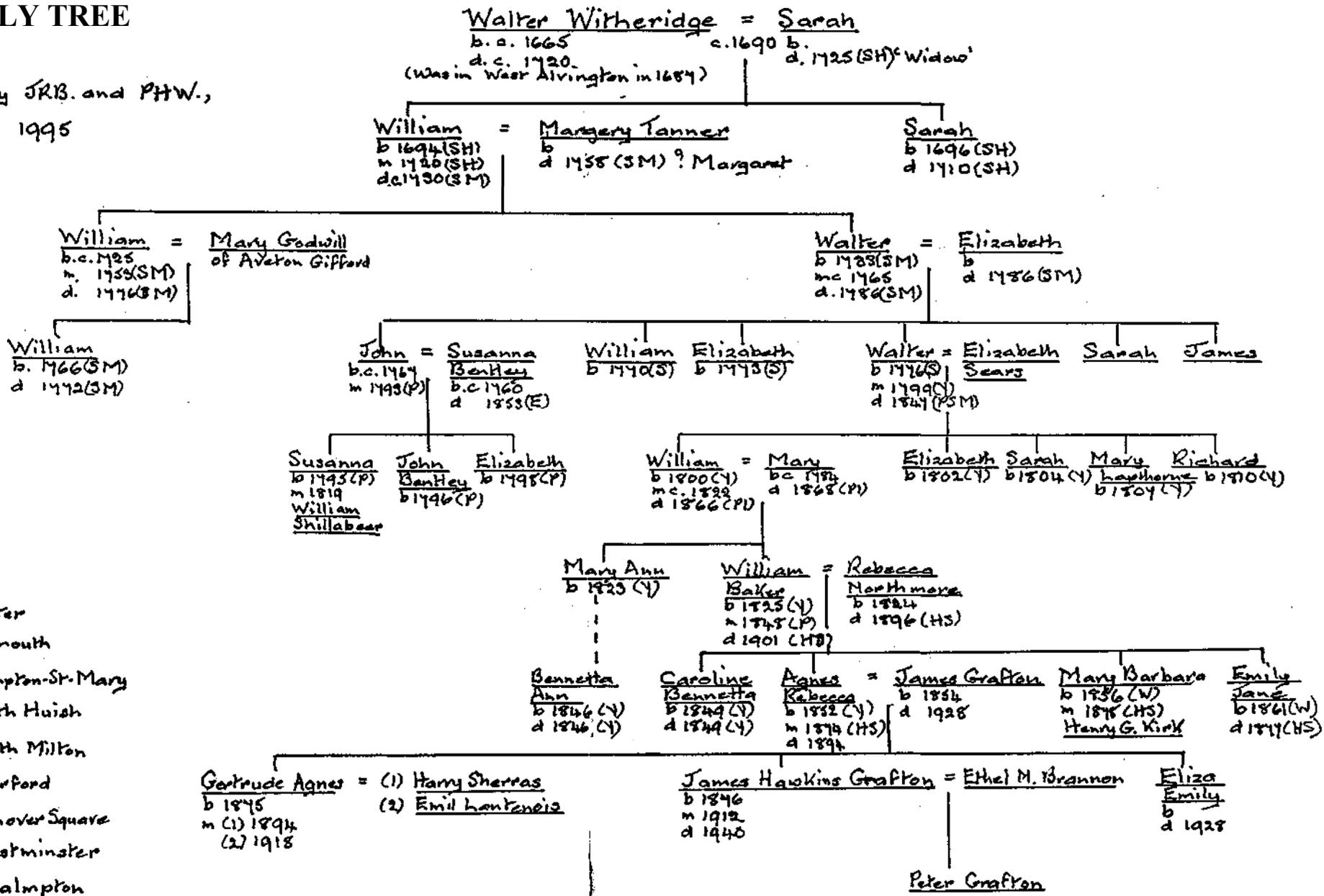
The lease of 1789 concerns a land tenement at Newton Ferrers owned by the wealthy Yonge family of Puslinch, and mentions John Witheridge, a mason of Yealmpton, and his brothers James and William.

The IGI records the baptism of James, son of Walter and Elizabeth, at Newton Ferrers on 27th September, 1778, but until the registers of the parish of Sherford were searched, we did not know the parentage of the brothers James, John and William. These records substantiate the fourth line of the family tree, the only birthplace so far undiscovered being that of John.

John terminated the lease on the Newton Ferrers property when he went to Plymouth in 1793 and married Susanna Bentley (see Kim's article magazine Summer 1990) They had three children, Susanna baptised 1795, John Bentley, baptised 1796, and Elizabeth baptised 1798. All were baptised in Plymouth.

# SOUTH HUISH/SOUTH MILTON/YEALMPTON FAMILY TREE

Constructed by J.R.B. and P.H.W.,  
October, 1995



- E = Exeter
- P = Plymouth
- PL = Plympton-St. Mary
- SH = South Huish
- SM = South Milton
- S = Sherford
- HS = Hanover Square
- W = Westminster
- Y = Yealmpton

We do not know what happened to John's two brothers William and James, or his sisters Elizabeth and Sarah, but we do know that his brother Walter married Elizabeth Sears in Yealmpton in 1799, and they appear to have settled there. Five children were born to them in Yealmpton. Kim discussed the possibilities of their futures in her article in the magazine of Autumn of 1987.

The oldest child, William, married a 'Mary' (? Mary Baker) circa 1822. They had two children - Mary baptised 1823, and William Baker Witheridge baptised 1825, both at Yealmpton.

On the Census of 1851, William is found in a dwelling 'On the road leading from Yealmpton to Plymouth' and is described as being aged 50 and 'a labourer-in-woods'. His wife, Mary, was seventeen years older than he, but nevertheless she outlived him. Mary Witheridge was living at home with her parents, and her profession was given as 'dressmaker'.

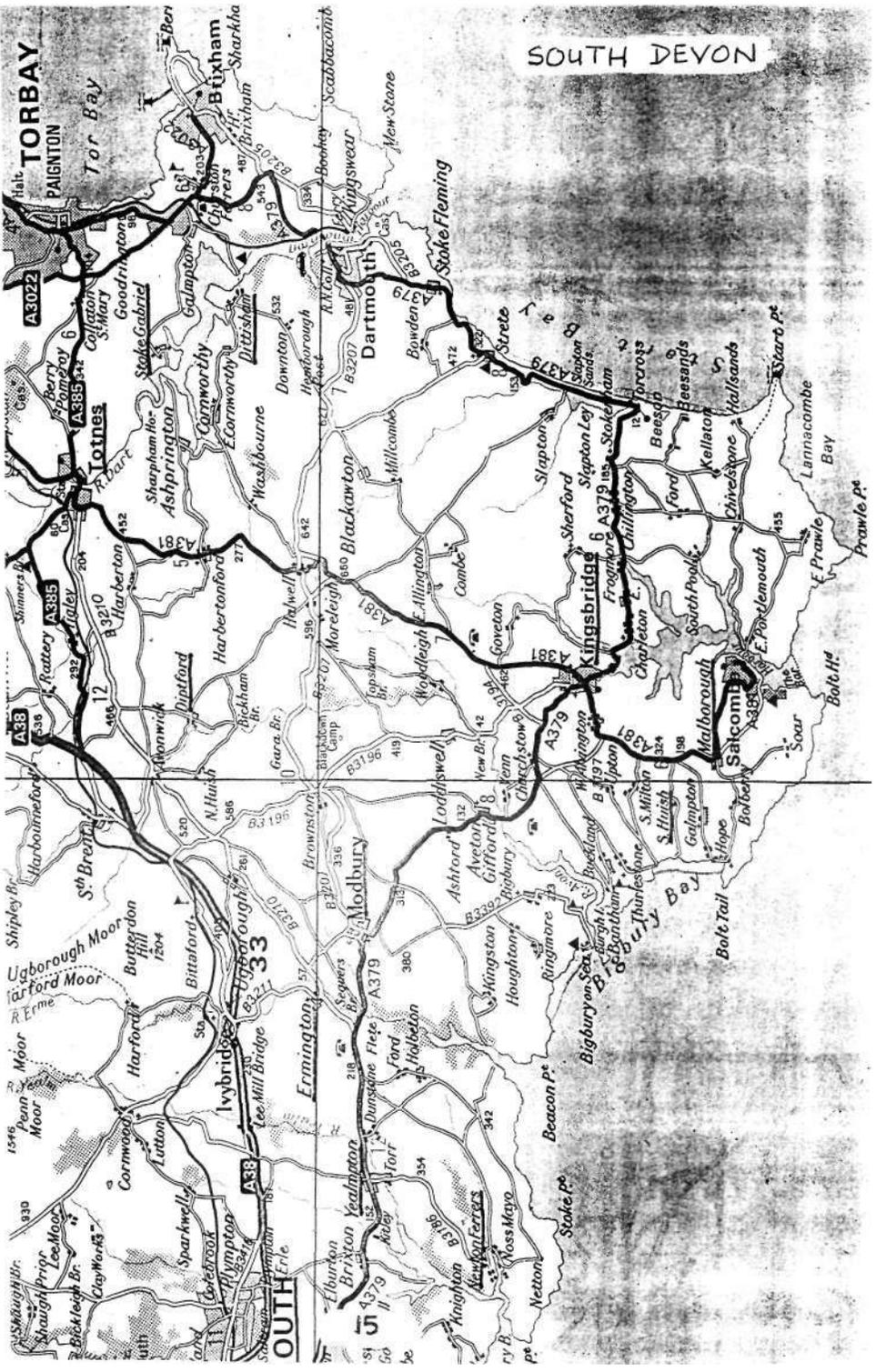
William died in 1866, aged 66, and Mary died in 1868. We have her death certificate, and it tells us that she was 84, the widow of William, an agricultural labourer, and that she died of typhoid fever.

In the year 1851, William Baker Witheridge was still in the Yealmpton district, and described as a 'Master Tailor', with his wife Rebecca Northmore as a 'dressmaker'. Subsequently they moved to London, where their deaths are recorded in the Westminster district.

Four children were born to them, and one of them, Agnes Rebecca, born 1852, married James Grafton in the Hanover Square area of London, and it was their son James who was the father of member Peter Grafton.

One aspect we find remarkable in this family is the persistence of the names 'Walter' and 'William' so far down the family line. We began with a Walter Witheridge who named his son William Walter. Could Walter's father have been 'William', or another 'Walter'? No one comes to mind immediately, but if anyone has found an unattached William or Walter who could be the father of Walter, born circa 1665, do please let us know.

# SOUTH DEVON



## A VISIT TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS - EVENTUALLY

by June Witheridge

To celebrate their 21st birthday, the Federation of Family History Societies were to hold a Reception at the House of Lords on the 22nd September, 1995, and each Family History Society was offered a ticket.

To explain to those not at the Witheridge Day last May, when John our Membership Secretary announced this, two of us were interested, Kim Cook and myself. Kim has done masses of research work for herself and others, is our Honorary Life President, and is well known to other researchers, and I - I wanted to see the inside of the House of Lords, so what could I say? It had to be Kim. However John said "If there's a chance of another ticket, I'll let you know. One proviso, write a short article about it".

A few weeks later comes a letter from John beginning "Cinderella shall go the Ball". He'd been offered another ticket!

Like all the best laid plans this didn't go exactly as foreseen. It was going to be incorporated into a few days break in London along with my husband, David, but by the time we left Plymouth this had dwindled to two days. We had toyed with the idea of travelling by train or coach, but in the end decided to drive. That's O.K. David would be the one driving through central London and I could take my whole wardrobe and spend the journey trying to decide what to wear!!

We were going to Delia and Don's (my daughter and her husband) in Bristol on Thursday and travelling to London on Friday morning, giving Delia a lift as she was attending a conference at Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre, next door to the Houses of Parliament, at 10.30 a.m. on the Friday morning. Thursday arrived and then some friends needed a lift to Weston-Super-Mare. Plans were changing by the minute, but no problem, it was en-route anyway!

A good journey to Bristol, a nice evening with Delia and Don, up early on Friday, and David is going down with flu! What a quandary, shall I be the caring wife - take him back to Plymouth and nurse him lovingly? The advantage of this plan is that I get out of the alternative, driving into central London, with no idea of where I'm going, at 9. 0 a.m. on a Friday morning. Difficult choice! Half an hour later finds poor snuffling David on Parkway station with his meagre portion of the luggage in a plastic bag, waiting for a train to Plymouth and the joy of bed and whisky and lemon.

We are on the road, heading for London, later than we should be and me VERY nervous. Surprise surprise, we make it, only five minutes late, not bad, all the way from Bristol, and I feel very smug! I drop Delia and now have to find my way to the hotel, somewhere near Victoria. It's in a quiet square, quiet because it seems impossible to find a way in. It's on a one-way road system, and I try about five different roads, each time being turned the wrong way, until eventually I make it and book in!

The hotel is adequate - that's about all, but as I said, quiet and convenient to Victoria, also near to a 24 hour manned car park. It's a beautiful day and I don't want to use the car any more in London, so it's park, back to the hotel, a quick call to check that David made it back to Plymouth, change and set off for Victoria and thence the Methodist Central Hall, our base for the day, where I am to meet Kim.

As an extra to our day, we have a choice of conducted tours of Apsley House (the home of the Duke of Wellington), the War Cabinet Rooms, or the Society of Genealogists' library. We have decided on the latter. It is now 12.30 p.m., and we do not need to be at the library until 2.30. Wonderful! Lots of time for lunch. I haven't had anything since a meagre breakfast at the crack of dawn, Kim's hadn't been much later, so we tuck in, have a look at the exhibition which includes some wonderful wall hangings on the subject of family trees and tracing ancestors and then ..... Gosh! Where had the time gone? The Society of Genealogists is right through the City, and we've left it too late for bus or tube, we will have to take a taxi.

I've watched and heard many programmes on the wonderful training called "The knowledge" that all London taxi drivers must take, it enables them to know the whereabouts of every street in London. Well, one got through the net! Our driver is very friendly and helpful but doesn't have any idea of our destination. As it is on Aldersgate, a stones throw from the Barbican centre, this seems quite odd, but Kim has her little photocopied map and directs him, so that's O.K., and we're only a few minutes late. This is becoming a habit!

The tour of the centre is fascinating and conducted by a very knowledgeable librarian. For those who don't know it, there's an immense amount of information available. Registers, some as early as 1538, one of the largest collections in the country, directories, poll books,

periodicals, parish histories, monumental inscriptions of many churches, collections in counties, family histories, special collections, pedigrees, hundreds of reference books from Burke's Peerage to 533 volumes of Boyd's marriage index. There are registers on professions, apprenticeships, universities, Forces lists, Wills, probate registry, religious records, including Jews and Huguenots, overseas and emigration, the international genealogical index, etc., etc., etc. Fees are £3.0 an hour or £10.0 a day for non-members and worth every penny I should think.

After this bombardment it's back to the Central Hall, being given a lift with some other guests this time, which is nice, time for a cup of coffee and a quick mingle, then time to transfer to the House of Lords and...would you believe... we're early and not allowed in until the dot of 5.15, so we form an orderly queue!

The House of Lords is quite something. We start off in the Cholmondeley room and on the Terrace, a short welcome by Lord Teviot, light refreshments and drinks, and then in groups of about 15 - 20 we are conducted by young researchers around both the Lords and the Commons. It is fascinating and little anecdotes by our guides make it even more interesting.

Our elected and unelected representatives certainly work and play in a beautiful, historical atmosphere with dozens of weird and wonderful customs and foibles, e.g., we were all allowed to lean on the dispatch box but not sit on the seats! This and other strange traditions make me wonder whether a privatised parliament would be able to survive? Make a profit? Remove the burden from the taxpayer? I think I've heard this before somewhere. Still, I would hate to have missed it.

We now return to the Terrace where out of approximately 300 hundred guests Kim and I start chatting to a very pleasant couple who turn out to be the parents of Kim's godson's best friend. Small world, isn't it? More refreshments and drinks and a few short speeches, then the cutting of the 21st birthday cake.

It's a beautiful evening with the lights shining on the Thames and a soft velvety sky and then, as we had been admitted on the dot of 5.15, so, on the stroke of 8.30, like 300 Cinderellas we're gently ushered out - just time to exchange a few names and addresses and back to reality, the tube to Victoria, after a long and very fascinating day.

## WINTERS PAST

by Joyce Browne

Terror struck the town of Barnstaple, North Devon, in the early hours of the morning of the 20th January, 1606. At 3. 0 a.m., with the incoming tide, a terrible storm swept up the river from the sea, and raged over the countryside.

Familiar as they were with the wild weather of North Devon, and the perils they habitually faced at sea, the sailors and the inhabitants of the town must have quaked as the flood tide raced up the river and the gale buffeted their ships in harbour and their dwellings on shore.

Barnstaple stands at the head of the estuary of the river Taw. In the seventeenth century it was already an ancient town, and the third richest in Devon. This night great damage was done to stores and houses and people were killed. Robert Langdon, the Parish Clerk wrote:-

"There was such a mighty storm and tempest from the river of Barnstaple with the coming of the tide, that it caused much loss of goods and houses to the valley of two thousand lands\* besyde the death of James Froste and two of his children. They were in his house that fell down upon them and killed them. This storm began at 3 of clock in the morning and continued tyll 12 of clock of the same day."

\* Should this have been transcribed as "to the value of two thousand pounds"?

Yet, that same month an extraordinary calm fell on the town. It was so cold that the river froze, and the ice was so thick that people could walk across the river from the ancient bridge to the castle rock, where once had been a fortification. Again, it was Robert Langdon who recorded:-

"The river was so frozen in January that many hundred people did walke over hand in hand from the bridge unto Castle Rock, with staves in their hands as safe as they could goe on dry ground. Being the very same month as the flood was."

What a sight that must have been!

Some of those who were children when the great storm came were to see a repeat performance. In 1662 John Sloly, Parish Clerk wrote:-

"1662 the 18th day of Feb the wind was so hearde  
the like was never heard with us in England which  
"did us a great deal of hurt."

The inhabitants of Barnstaple cannot have been the only ones to feel the effects of the great frosts and storms. In Combe Martin the ancestors of our widespread member families were living, they must have suffered in the general turmoil, and Ilfracombe and Bideford cannot have escaped. Bradworthy, too, although further south, probably froze in the general cold, even if it escaped the coastal gales.

Fourteen years after the gale of 1662, in 1676, the inhabitants of Barnstaple endured another hardship.

"December, 1676: Frost was so great that the oldest man then living did never know the like for it was so hard froze that many were afraid to roast there (sic) meat for it to eat it because they could not get watter for to boyle the pot."

Imagine being surrounded by ice, and yet not being able to get enough water!

The phrase "the oldest man then living" is intriguing. If only the Clerk had named him (or her) ! Could it possibly have been one of 'ours'?

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#### MORE ABOUT WITHERIDGE FARM IN SOMERSET

by David E. Witheridge

After I sent in the article about the small Witheridge places in England (Vol 9. No. 3 Autumn 1995), and not long before my wife Elizabeth died in August, I was going through some old files and came across a letter I had forgotten about from Beth Norman of Lake Crystal, Minnesota. She had heard me give a talk at the English Interest Group of our Minnesota Genealogical Society about our 1980 trip to Britain and had heard me mention that one of my Devon ancestral families was 'Norman'. She had come up to me and said that she had a book about her family entitled 'Norman Genealogy', by William E. Norman, in which he told how some of her ancestors had lived for a while on a place called 'Witheridge Farm'.

In her letter she said she had looked up the information and found that prior to their coming to Canada in 1833, George Norman and Joan Leigh were married on a farm at Quarme, a little place in Somerset not far from Winsford. They stayed there nine years and had four children before moving to Witheridge Farm (listed as the fifth Witheridge place in my first article), where they stayed fourteen years.

The author said it was a fine large farm of 200 acres. The old farmhouse was large, having been the residence of a land owner. The rooms were large and the parlour boasted a wooden floor, the only one downstairs in the country around. The hall, dining room and kitchen, pantry and dairy had stone floors. Each room contained a fireplace and the large bedrooms upstairs had fireplaces. At the back was another building having a kitchen downstairs and bedrooms upstairs where the servants - four men and three women - had their rooms. Eighteen cows were kept and butter and cheese made every day".

Beth went on to tell of their own visit to the farm (I'm not sure what year that was):-

"Our son Jim had been there several years before us and had met the family, so we stayed at the home of Mr. & Mrs. David Norman at Gupworthy Farm near Wheddon Cross...Mrs. Norman was kind enough to drive us around and show us the country. She took us to the church at Winsford, as that was supposed to be the family's church. From there we went to Witheridge Farm.

"To get to the farmyard we drove down a narrow lane into the yard. The house was a two-storey building. The lady who lived there said it was about 300 years old. The walls were 18 to 20 inches thick at the bottom and about 8 inches at the top. She was sure it had originally been a thatched roof. None of the doorways were square, but were all round at the top. The stone floors were large stones of slate colour and set into a sort of cement. The upstairs doorways were only about 5 feet high, so you really had to stoop to enter them. The front door was made of slabs of wood and was about 4 inches thick. The big iron straps and the bolts in these iron pieces were very obviously hand made."

I wonder if this fascinating old farmhouse is still there? It doesn't sound to me like a building that is apt to have fallen down. I'm sorry we didn't try to see it when we came to England in 1988. Is there someone over there who would like to investigate and see if there still is a 300 year old house on Witheridge Farm?

CALLING ALL COMPUTER WIZARDS!

Kathy Witheridge of Ontario has been working hard on a project which could be of great benefit to members. She is putting all the births, marriages and deaths listed on the GRO - St. Catherine's House - registers, on a data base on her computer. Kathy hopes to have this task completed by the next Annual General Meeting.

Kathy says that when this is done, anyone with the right equipment will be able to search for names, sort by dates of birth, places of birth, and make other selections. This would be a great help and a tremendous boon!

At the moment Kathy herself needs help. She is asking if there is anyone who runs a data base on an IBM compatible computer? What she would like to do is forward a copy of her disk and have it checked by someone.

If there is anyone who thinks that they might be able to assist, please get in touch with Kathy:- Mrs. K.M. Witheridge - address inside front cover of the magazine.

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

No. 27 Mr. Peter Grafton, CBE., 57 Padbrook,  
Limpsfield, Oxted,  
Surrey RH8 0DZ

(1) Peter Witheridge Grafton (2) James Hawkins Grafton  
1876-1940 (4) James Grafton 1854-1926 (5) Agnes  
Rebecca Witheridge 1824-1899 (10) William Baker  
Witheridge 1825-1901 (11) Rebecca Northmore 1824-1896  
(20) William Witheridge 1800-1866 (40) Walter  
Witheridge c 1775-c1847 (41) Elizabeth Sears

I take great pleasure in the fact that Peter has re-joined the Witheridge Society, and I would like to welcome him on behalf of all our members, those of us who know him and those who have joined in the years in between.

Peter and I have corresponded once or twice per year for some time now. This year he was torn between attending the Northmore gathering with me, and a prior engagement at his local church (singing with the choir at a special event). I am sad that myself and the Northmore meeting came second to the choir, although I guessed this would happen because I have come to realise that in Peter's life, commitments are commitments - but in a round about way this has resulted in the Society having a member return to its midst.

Peter's family line within the Witheridge group of families was always a little restricted with the earliest date being a birth circa 1776 with a possible line for another generation to circa 1740/50s. My brother Philip believes that there may be a link to the South Milton and Thurlestone families and in turn to the Totnes and Newton Abbot family from the Yealmpton family. We must now try to prove the connections and extend the Witheridge links to Peter's family line. It is possible that Peter may have a distant connection to our newest member, Mr. David Davis of Nottingham. Welcome Peter.

#### NEW MEMBERS

- 129 Mrs. Mavis Witheridge
- 130 Mrs. Carmel Wiseman née Witheridge
- 121 Mr. Barry Wiseman

Contact address:- 3/12 Seaforth Road, Shoalwater,  
West Australia 6169, Australia.

(1) Mavis Jean Witheridge, née Coutts, wife of the late William Alfred George Witheridge 1913-1993, (2) William Henry Witheridge 1881-1932 (3) Mary Kathleen Burns bc 1892-1928, (4) Alfred Percy Witheridge 1855-1904, (5) Polly Witheridge 1863-1944, (8) John Phillips Witheridge bc 1803-1871, (9) Jane Percy bc 1812-1869 (10) Richard Witheridge 1835 - (11) Mary Ann Hatherley bc 1845 - (16) Richard Witheridge bc 1780-1834, (17) Mary Phillips - 1844 (20) John Phillips Witheridge bc 1803-1871, (21) Jane Percy bc 1812-1869.

Whitchurch/Tavistock 1800-1885, South/West Australia  
1885 - present day.

I would like to welcome Mavis, Carmel and Barry to the Witheridge Society. Mavis and I have been corresponding for some years after John James, member No.108, sent me an address. Although this address was somewhat out of date, it was updated by Flo Streatfield, member No. 107, and Mavis and I have written with increasing interest ever since.

Mavis, who has been over here on holiday recently, has met a number of our English Witheridges, and says that she is pleasantly surprised by our friendly outlook and happy manner, but I do hasten to warn any of you who might meet her in the future that Mavis has a wicked sense of humour! Let me explain:-

The day Mavis arrived she telephoned as arranged, and we agreed to meet in the foyer of her hotel on a Sunday at mid-day. We met and retired to the bar for a coffee. I noticed

that I was the centre of some attention, and even more, the focus of some humour from some of her countrymen and women. Later, we drove around London taking in the sights and sounds of our capital, and arrived back at the hotel after some four/five hours. Then Mavis confided to me that she had set me up. She had previously informed members of her party that she had booked a male escort, who was arriving to take her out for the day and show her the sights!

Well, by now I hope that you all know me - I love a good joke, but I was not going to let that pass without some retaliation, so as I stood up to go, and loud enough for the whole bar to hear, I dug my hand in my pocket and jingled my loose change as much as I could and brought out a large handful. This I gave to Mavis, saying loudly, and as naturally as possible, "No, Madam - the Company insists that I give you the correct change to keep the account straight!" In the hushed silence that followed, and giving Mavis a peck on the cheek, I took my leave. Perhaps some day Mavis will tell the sequel to this story!

Mavis, in the true spirit of the Australian members of our society, who I have come to know so very well in these last few years, is honest and open, giving me a truly in depth understanding about her section of the Witheridge family. In truth it bears out what other members of that large family have told me in the past. You will remember the startling facts that Flo and I brought to your attention two years ago? Now it has happened all over again. From the conversations here in England, I have been able, with the help of statements that Mavis has made, to put together the rest of the family to which Polly Witheridge, nee Witheridge, belonged, (her brothers and sisters).

You will remember Marion, Polly's next youngest sister, who we found two years ago? Well, it is probable that there were two more sisters and another brother, and as a plus we have located the registration of the marriage of Mary, the sister of Alfred Percy and Richard Witheridge, (brothers). All this from this one territory of south Australia where it is almost impossible to research as very few records have been published.

I give my grateful thanks to Mavis and another member for sending data which appeared to be of little significance until it was set into perspective by chance remarks. The other member - who else but Velma Metcalfe!

John Witheridge

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY - continued from front cover

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PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE SOCIETY SHOULD BE  
PAID TO THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

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Devon Record Office, (Tel. No. 01392-53509)  
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