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Spring 2003

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Publisher and Distributor	Mrs. Kim Cook, Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6NS

Continued on back cover



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VISIT THE WITHERIDGE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY WEB SITE

<http://www.WitheridgeFHS.com>

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

My first greeting to you as Editor was written for the Witheridge Times of Summer, 1991, and in that edition I appealed for articles and items of interest. I would like to thank all those who have responded to that appeal over the years, and so made it possible for the magazine to continue and to expand. There is still a need for material for our pages, and so I hope that you will still respond with your stories and items of interest. As I have decided to give up the editorship after this edition I shall miss being able to read items first hand, but I hope to continue reading the magazine for a long time to come.


In this edition we have news from our families overseas, and as I write we are very concerned about the news of the Australian bush fires, and do hope that none of our families have been affected since they gave us their news at Christmas.

There is a family history with a difference from Maureen and Richard Witheridge, and I think a moral comes through that we should follow up our recent family members and not just those from our past.

I like to think that readers will have a chuckle over the story of a ship's pet, recalled in the memoirs of Reginald Chapman, now concluded.

Bob Thomas's article about life in the 1930s will stir up some nostalgic thoughts for some of us, and provide a revealing insight into what working life was like in those days.

This is my last 'Goodbye' as Editor, but not I hope my last contact as a friend and member of the Witheridge families. My thanks to you all for your support, and my very best wishes for your futures.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joyce", with a horizontal flourish extending to the right.

FAMILY NEWS

Christmas brought greetings from our families near and far. Dorothy Witheridge, our representative in Australia, wrote to say that she hoped we would feel the joy and peace that Christmas brings.

She told us that they were experiencing the worst drought on record and that farmers had lost hope (this at a time when we were having torrential rain and many of our farmers had land sodden and underwater). Sydney was on an alert for a terrorist attack. Dorothy was looking forward to a joyful Christmas with some of her family who were driving down from Queensland.

Judith and Allan Witheridge of Figtree, Australia, sent a lovely poem and news of their family (children and grandchildren). They are all doing well and seem to be excelling in academic studies and sporting activities. The family has enjoyed wonderful holidays and Judith and Allan rejoiced at the birth of their 9th grandchild (seventh grandson). Some consequences of terrorism are beginning to affect Australian lives - Judith says that if anyone wishes to post a packet weighing more than 500g, it has to be done in person by the sender, who has to provide proof of identity.

We see on the news that Sydney is menaced by forest fires, and that there are fears that the ash may pollute the water supply. We do hope that this threat passes quickly.

In New Zealand summer has arrived and Rodney and Velma Metcalfe passed a quiet time after a hectic working run up to Christmas. Velma's last Botox injection was not successful, and she has to wait until March for the next one. Velma assures us that the injections are not to delay the onset of wrinkles, but to overcome the problem with her voice. We believe you, Velma!

John and Pat James of Canada told us that the Christmas season made them feel full of thanksgiving for their happy life and family, who are doing well in all their activities. John's angina is under control, and John and Pat have been able to travel to Italy, Sicily, and Vienna, and to participate in a pilgrimage to the holy sites in Ireland and England.

They continue with their family research, which brings them into contact with friends across the world.

Sad news came from June and David Witheridge of Plympton, Devon. Their little grandson, Oscar, did not survive birth. We did not know of this until too late to send our condolences, but we send them now, with hopes that there is a better year ahead for June, David and their family.

Change of Address:-

Member Annette Witheridge now has a different address -

311 East 38th Street,
Apartment 18B,
New York,
New York 10016,
USA.

Correction of e-mail address:-

The address given in the Autumn/Winter 2002 magazine for Mrs. Anne Geddes-Atwell was incorrect. It should read:

ageddesatwell@stny.rr.com

My apologies for the incorrect information.

STOP PRESS!

We are sorry to report that on the 29th January our Vice President, the Rev. David Witheridge, had a bad fall and broke his left femur. He has since had an operation and recovery will take some time. Enquiries may be made through his son Jim at:

3404 Emerson Avenue S.,
Apt. 304,
Minneapolis,
MN55408-3069 USA.

UK enquiries may be made through Kim Cook (e-mail roykimcook@aol.com). We are sure that get-well cards c/o Jim Witheridge would be appreciated.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND RE-UNION OF THE
WITHERIDGE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY. 3RD MAY. 2003

This is to take place at the home of Brenda and Ron Dixon:-

**21, Poplar Avenue,
Orpington,
Kent BR6 SLA**

Reception will be between 10.0 a.m. and 10.30 and the meeting will open promptly at 11.0 a.m.

Brenda and Ron have very kindly invited members to a buffet lunch at their home, and after lunch there will be time for exchange of information and family news, to be followed by a short talk.

For members wishing to stay on in the area, details of possible visits for Sunday and Monday will be announced at the meeting, when we know the choice of those attending.

Members who would like to attend are asked to complete the leaflet enclosed with this magazine and forward it as soon as possible to Mr. and Mrs. R. Dixon at the address above.

Annual General Meeting

I hereby give notice of the above meeting and invite all members to attend. If you are unable to be at the meeting, but would like to nominate a member as an officer (having first obtained his or her consent) it is possible to do so by postal vote or by e-mail. A postal or e-mail vote should be with me one week before the meeting, but it will not be counted until after the votes are counted at the meeting.

It is possible to raise a matter for discussion, or to make a proposal by post or e-mail, and it would be helpful if this could be with me at least one week before the meeting. My postal address is on the inside front cover of the Witheridge Times.

I can be reached by e-mail at:-

BROWNEJ392@aol.com

or

WitheridgeSocUK@aol.com

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence
2. Report on the 15th Annual General Meeting held at Tenterden, Kent on 4th May, 2002
3. Matters arising from the Report
4. Officers' Reports (as circulated)

Chairman's Report, Secretary's Report, Treasurer's Report,
Membership Secretary's Report, Research Co-ordinator's Report

(It would be appreciated if Officers would send me their reports as soon as they are completed in order that they may be printed and circulated prior to the meeting.)

5. Election of Officers

(The Society is in need of volunteers to take on some of the functions necessary for the continued running of the Society. Please give this matter your earnest consideration)

6. Any other business (including finalisation of the proposed arrangements for a three day event in Devonshire for the year 2004, and suggestions for the year 2005)

GRAHAM BROWNE CHAIRMAN

THE VALUE OF FAMILY HISTORY

IN SEARCH OF MY FAMILY IN LIVERPOOL

by Maureen Witheridge (née Shaw), September 2002

In 1994 when my brother Chris, at 46 years old, was diagnosed with Leukaemia, my other brother Barry and I were desperate to help, as were other members of our family. Regrettably our blood was not a suitable match for us to become bone marrow donors. The doctors then suggested that a match might be found on Dad's side of the family.

Dad, John Shaw, had moved to Bath in 1930, where he met my mother Doreen. He moved to find work as a bookbinder. He always talked about his home in Opie Street and brothers and sisters in Liverpool. His older brother Tom came to visit once in 1962, but Dad lost touch after that. He wrote to the Salvation Army and searched for his brother in the 1970's but to no avail. We have since found out that Uncle Tom's whole family had moved to Skelmersdale.

We went into depth searching Bath library's PRO records. My son Mark and his wife Jenny spent many hours in Birmingham Library looking for Marriages and Births. (There are an awful lot of Shaws in Liverpool)!

One day while in Southport library, my daughter Sue and I decided to look for the name 'Bebb' instead of Shaw. Dad always talked about his sister Lena having a little boy named Gordon Bebb. We found just one G. Bebb in the Liverpool telephone book! We rang Gordon and as soon as we mentioned Opie Street he knew that we could be family. It is incredible how kind people can be. We were complete strangers, yet welcomed by Gordon and his wife Jackie immediately. He suggested that we put an appeal in the Liverpool Echo, which we did, asking if anyone knew the whereabouts of the Shaws of Opie Street, Royal Street and Kilshaw Street.

We were inundated with calls the next day from people wanting to help, willing to have blood tests and possibly be bone marrow donors. Not just kind, caring family members like my new found cousin Olive, the first to ring me and offer help, and Edna, cousin Margaret's daughter, but people ringing to say they hoped they were related so that they could help.

One dear man called Mr. Flynn rang, full of enthusiasm, to say that he didn't

know any Shaws in Kilshaw Street but he knew a Murphy. We had to smile at that one!

Sadly none of this helped my brother, who was himself a doctor and knew that when he caught an infection he might not pull through, but in his own words "Although this hasn't helped me, something good has come out of all this". He was so brave.

Chris died in 1995 and was buried in the graveyard at Penrhys in the Rhondda Valley in Wales, where he had his practice. Had we known the family earlier, we might have been in time to save Chris.

We now know some wonderful relatives whom we never dreamt we would meet. Dad would have been so pleased and proud to have met and known them all.

We spent many hours putting together a portfolio of photographs and a family tree which we assembled using the information and photos available to us at the time. This I dedicated to my Dad who died in 1984 and my brother Chris.

We gleaned a lot of information from family members, and asked for any family stories etc., and copies of photos (all generations) so that we could add to this family portfolio. We apologised in advance if any of the information was incorrect and invited further information and comment.

We never did have any queries or objections, although we did get some updating of photographs. Since then I have since met another part of my family - the daughter and family of one of my cousins, another bonus for our efforts.

FINDERS...SEEKERS

The following information comes from Kathy Witheridge who has 'found' a tombstone in Lynton Cemetery, North Devon. The stone was erected in memory of a James Witheridge and the inscription reads:-

"James Witheridge who departed this life October 28th 1882
aged 38"

"In the midst of life there is death. Erected by his three children
14, 16, and 18 also Hannah wife of the above who died 28th May
1951 aged 97"

James was of the Bradworthy family, the son of Thomas Witheridge and Ann (Nancy) Moore. On the Census of 1881 he is recorded as living in Lynton with his wife and three daughters, Fanny, born 1861, Olive, born 1862, and Lillie born 1863, and earning his living as a carpenter and joiner. Death followed just over a year later. His wife Hannah lived to a remarkable age, and died in the North Colswold area.

James pre-deceased his father and mother, who had also left Bradworthy, and in 1881 they were farming at Upcott, Welcombe, North Devon. Thomas Witheridge died in 1899, seventeen years after the death of his son.

LIFE IN THE 1930'S

by Bob Thomas

*(Bob is the son of George Thomas and Ada Witheridge of the
Ermington/Poole/Bournemouth and later London family)*

I left school in 1932 aged fourteen having gained an apprenticeship with the then Gas Light and Coke Company, and started in their Training Shops at Nine Elms, just off the road from the Battersea Dogs' Home. This was a five storey building, housing a foundry on the bottom floor, then various machine shops to the fourth floor, which was our training shop. On the fifth floor there was a fine canteen and Billiard Room, also table tennis, etc. We finished work at 5.30 p.m., then had time to kill until we had to go to Night School at Westminster, this was from 7.30 p.m., to 9.0 p.m., then followed by the journey home, which in my case took an hour and a half, to be repeated again in the morning to be at work by 8.0 a.m.

What went on between the lads and the Canteen girls in the "killed time" is best not recorded - the rest of us played games!

Of course, all young people in those days were well behaved - weren't they? One favourite stunt was to get a group on top of the tram to Westminster, and by moving in unison to get it rocking - just not quite enough to topple it! Another "play" was on our cycles, we would ride slowly in front of a tram, which of course could not overtake. The poor frustrated driver would be cursing and swearing and clanging

his bell, until we tired of it and let him by. It was just all "mischief" with no harm done to anyone.

It was a good apprenticeship lasting in all some six years. It covered pipe work, lead working, sheet metal work, turning foundry work, welding, carpentry, and even a certain amount of bricklaying, in that we were making brick lined furnaces. I am not suggesting that we did a full course of it all, but enough to get by on, and it served me well for many years. One job we did a lot of at this time was converting bakers' ovens from wood fired to gas. This job had to be completed in about five hours so as not to delay the next day's bread. This involved the young smaller apprentice crawling into the still hot oven on a pile of sacks to brick up part of the flue at the far end - and it was warm!

Another part of our job was to clean a row of gas lamps which illuminated the fascia of the roof parapet, which we had to lean over to get at the lamps. They were very big, having as many as sixteen mantles, these were very fragile and enclosed in a glass bowl about fourteen inches in diameter and sixteen or so inches long. They were housed in a rim hinged on one side, with a clip on the other. The drill was to unclip, swing the rim until you could pull the glass out, clean it, and reassemble. Very occasionally we would drop a bowl, and honestly, you could count the seconds until the bowl hit the mud of the River Thames below. Then you had to face the fury of the Instructor, who was a fiery little man who took his "Co partnership" very seriously. You would think that he had to pay for the new one! Our various duties took us all over Greater London, and we went into some very interesting factories, picking up a lot of information on the way.

Each group of apprentices numbered about thirty, and it was on an annual basis numbered in sequence - mine was S.6. After three years we finished with the shop and were dispersed to the various "Districts" approximately according to where you lived - mine was Hounslow, roughly nine miles from my home. There you were assigned to a "fitter" with whom you worked as his "mate" to learn the practical side of the job. Meanwhile we continued to attend night school at Westminster, three nights a week, this whilst working a forty eight hour week, 8. a.m., to 5.30 p.m daily and 8.0 a.m., to 1.30 p.m., on a Saturday. - you then had homework, swotting for City and Guilds examinations. It did not leave a lot of spare time for fun! However it was darned good training.

One of my jobs was to help in "carcassing" which meant fitting all the pipe work in the then new Gillette Razor Factory on the Great West Road. This involved lots of four inch diameter steel pipes, some of which had to be bent in a forge, the threads were cut by hand in enormous ratchet dies, then it had to be lifted to the ceiling height and screwed together. On a lot of these jobs we had to deliver our own tools on a two wheeled hand cart - walking up to five miles to the job.

A lot of private house work involved crawling under the floor amongst all sorts of dirt and debris to fit pipes into various rooms, or to work in filthy loft spaces. All work had to be as inconspicuous as possible or it would be rejected by the foreman when he came round to inspect it. In those days every time you worked on a house, on completion you had to pressure test the system, if any leak was found you had to stay on the job until you had repaired it, whether it took half an hour or a week - these repairs were not charged for! On occasion I have worked in houses where we killed bugs on the wall by hitting them with a hammer!

Round about 1935 the old Victorian gas geyser which was usually fitted in the bathroom to heat the water only (it caused a lot of fatalities, either by the victims inhaling too much oxygen, or by the emission of carbon monoxide) gave way to the modern water heater. An example was the ASCOT which only lit up when the water tap was turned on. This was usually fitted in the better ventilated kitchen, the hot water could be piped to the bathroom, etc. This in turn led to copper pipes replacing steel, and also to a demand in some cases, for the exposed pipes to be chromium plated. To do this the poor fitter had to connect up all the pipes, test, then dismantle the whole lot, send it away to be plated, when after about two weeks the whole lot had to be refitted - if he was lucky not too many pipes got bent in transit!

This was the normal procedure until 1929 and the outbreak of war, when everything changed of course. Most of us had to spend nights on duty in case of bomb emergencies, often guarding the big gasometers (gas holders) where we had big steel sheets. If the gas holder was punctured by a bomb splinter (and caught fire) we were supposed to slap the steel sheets on top of the hole to put the fire out!

Soon after the war there was a lot of work fitting out temporary houses - "pre-fabs" as they were called, then came a slump as supplies ran out. This was followed of course by the nationalisation of the industry, then the change to North Sea Gas, which is where I left it.

The change of atmosphere was unbelievable, even a lot of decent people changed - doing as little work as possible, and still booking for eight and a half hours! Many took to working privately, often in the Firm's time, using Firm's materials - a lot of money was made...

To satisfy the Union man I used to complete eight and a half hours (theoretical) work in about two hours and then go home. My boss knew, he said "there is nothing you can do about it, I know where to find you if you are needed".

The hardest job of the day was filling in the time sheet with a clear conscience!

MEN OF PROPERTY

by Joyce Browne

It is pleasant to discover that we have men of property among our ancestors, even if the property never seems to descend to us.

One man of substance, although may be moderate substance, was **Richard Witheridge** of Barnstaple. In the year 1570 he negotiated a lease with the Mayor and Wardens of the Longe Bridge at Barnstaple for "that Halle House and Chamber lyinge and beinge situate and above a Certain Cellar appurtayning to the said Longe Bridge".

The Long Bridge at Barnstaple was the main artery to the town. It was first built in the late 13th century, and the bridge referred to in the lease would have been its successor built around 1437. It was about 700 ft. long, with sixteen pointed arches, and it spanned the river Taw, leading to the busy quay sides of Barnstaple.

Barnstaple at that time was the premier trading district of north Devon. Its ships brought goods from Ireland and Europe, and some from as far as the New World. It traded in copper and tin, woollens, textiles, fish and other commodities. It had a weekly market and an annual fair. Once it had a castle, but nothing of that now remains, and the wording of the lease suggests that even in 1570 the castle had ceased to be.

A property on or near the Long Bridge would have been in a prime trading position, and I feel that Richard Witheridge was a merchant rather than a farmer, although the terms of his lease say 'and unto farme, lette'.

A hall house was an early form of construction, with a chamber under one roof, and may be a gallery or first floor at one end. Originally there was a fire in the centre of the hall with a hole in the roof to let out the smoke, but by this time chimneys had come into use, and the fire was moved to one or both ends of the building. This house must have been a substantial structure to have had a cellar. The lease also mentions 'a chamber'. It could be that Richard conducted his business and had his storage in the hall house and slept and lived in the additional chamber.

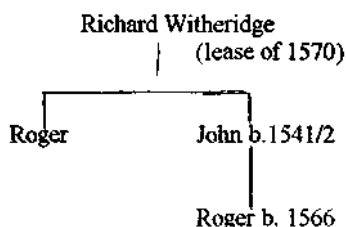
Richard had neighbours - John Bonde on the east, John Dart on the south, stables belonging to Thomas Brave on the west, and the frontage to the north on to a street called 'Maiden Street'. (One wonders if that was named after Queen Elizabeth the Virgin Queen)

By 1570 Richard would have been known to his neighbours as he was already in 'tenure and occupacion' when the new lease was signed for a period of four score years. What do we know of Richard? Frustratingly little!

If Richard were to die before the lease expired, the tenure was to pass to his son Roger, and then to a grandson, also Roger, the offspring of another son of Richard's - John born 1451/2.

The lease by-passed John and one wonders if his father thought that he already had sufficient property?

The family descent was:-



This alters our perceptions of the relationships of the Barnstaple family. In our early versions of the family tree we pictured Richard and John as possible brothers with Roger as their father. Now we know that this was not so, Roger and John were brothers with Richard being their father. Our latest version of the tree shows that there must have been more than one Richard alive at the same time (this after further investigation of our sources)

The parish registers record no birth of a Richard or his death, nor birth record of a Roger, until the baptism of Roger, son of John, in 1566, but we do have evidence that Roger, son of Richard, his brother John, and John's son Roger did not have long to enjoy their property in Barnstaple.

In the 16th century there were sporadic outbreaks of plague, and in Barnstaple in 1547 an outbreak overwhelmed the parish authorities and the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials were not kept for seventy seven days.

In the year 1580 plague was raging. The number of deaths was so great that not all victims could be buried and between September and March 1580 forty victims were burned.

Where entries were made in the registers the letter 'P' beside the name indicated that the deceased died of plague, and we find that four of the victims were:

John Wetheridge	buried 29 th March, 1580
Roger Wetheridge	" 5 th October 1580
Roger Wetheridge 'son of John'	" 18 th October, 1580
Annys Wetheridge 'daughter of John'	" 10 th November 1580

Imagine the grief and sorrow as this family was struck down.

What of the property? The named 'three lives' to whom the lease was granted were now dead, so it was unlikely that it remained in Witheridge hands.

This family was devastated not only by plague, but by other deaths. In 1564 John had married Elizabeth Stephens, alias Loder. They had eleven children, the last being Simon, baptised on the 4th September, 1580. His mother Elizabeth was buried on that same day, 4th September, 1580.

In the 16th century the New Year began on 25th March, and so the sequence of deaths in the family was:-

29 th March	John, born 1541-2 buried
4 th September	Elizabeth (wife) buried
5 th October	Roger (brother of John) buried
18 th October	Roger (son of John) buried
10 th November	Annys (daughter of John) buried

Another child of John and Elizabeth, Urithe, was buried in 1575, and Simon the last child lived only until he was nine years old.

One child, John, born in 1572, lived on to become a man of property himself. He was a mariner and a merchant trader, making regular voyages to America to fish off the coast of Maine, and to trade with the native Americans and others. He married Agnes Cockhill in Fremington in 1602, and he died either at sea or somewhere overseas sometime before 1657. When his widow Agnes died around 1658 she had property which included 'my great and little farm' animals, a house, furniture, silver and other items.

There was a Witheridge connection with Fremington, a parish adjoining Barnstaple, before the marriage of 1602. We have a copy of a lease, dated 1598, granted to one Roger Witheridge, a husbandman of Fremington, for a property in Barnstaple.

This lease, even more difficult to read than the one made in 1570, was between the Mayor and Burgesses of Barnstaple and Roger Witheridge, and was for a 'Tenement, Curtilage and gardens' and Roger was granted permission to farm.

It is clear from the description of the position of the land, that this was not the same property as in the lease of 1570. It was lying near Crown land called 'Castle Hayes' and another piece of land called 'Castle Dike' which gives us an indication that it was near the castle mound.

Unfortunately for us, only Roger is named in the document. His 'Executors and Assynges' are referred to but not named. Does this mean that he had no children to inherit?

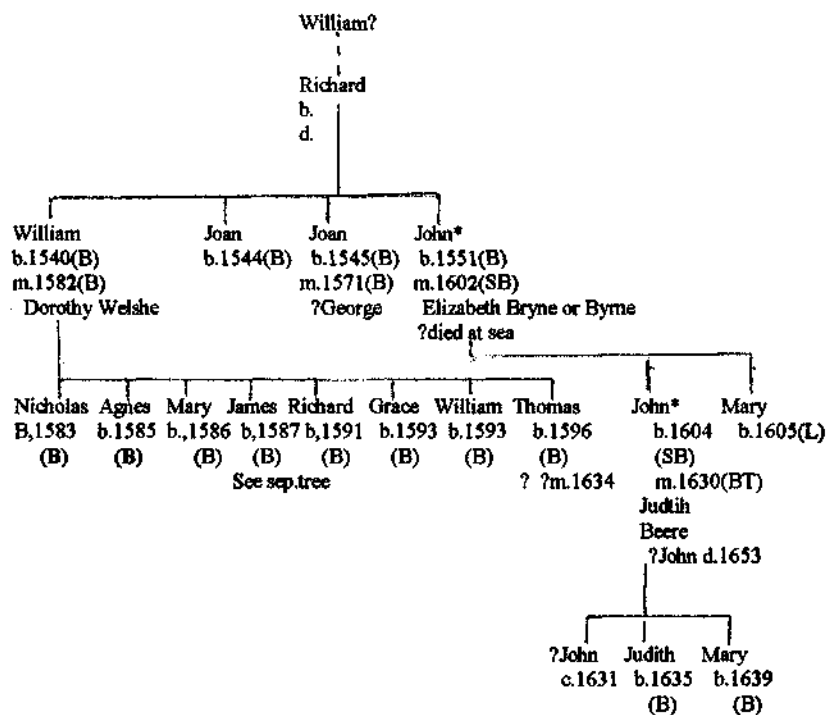
Who was this Roger? The parish records at Fremington do not begin until the year 1600 and we have no record of a birth. A Roger Witheridge was buried in Fremington in 1608, and a Joane Witheridge a widow was buried in 1609.

Because of the first name I am inclined to think that the Roger of the lease of 1598 may have been a brother or cousin of the Richard who made the lease of 1570. Certainly the name Roger continued down in this family until the 17th century.

At least three of the descendants of John Witheridge, born 1541/2 became well known sea captains whose exploits have been researched and written about. We lost sight of the family when Edward Witheridge, born 1656, and his brother John born 1659, settled in America. Their two sisters married - Wilmot married a man surnamed 'Terry' and the other a man named 'Stacey', - families we have not investigated.

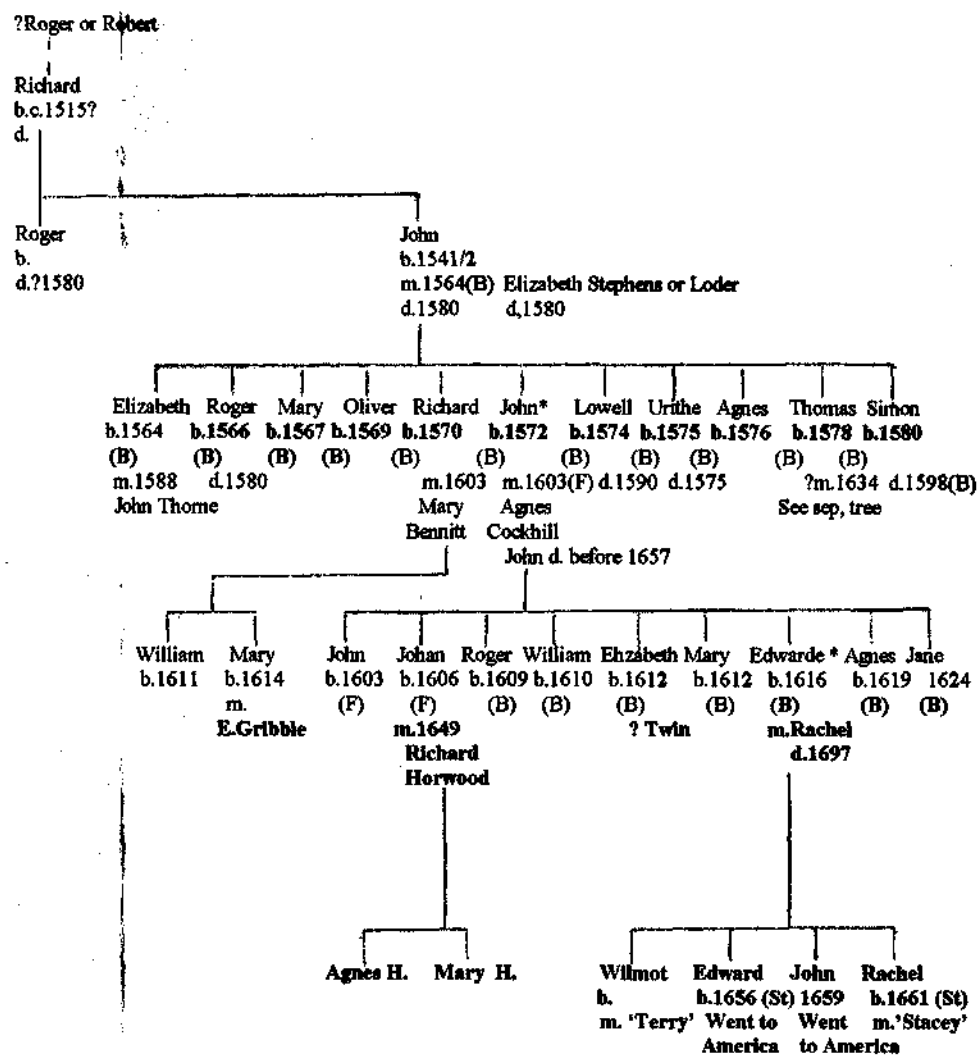
The leases on property have given us a tantalising glimpse, we need to find more sources of information because what we do know of this family shows that it contained some fascinating characters!

BARNSTAPLE AND EAST LONDON FAMILY

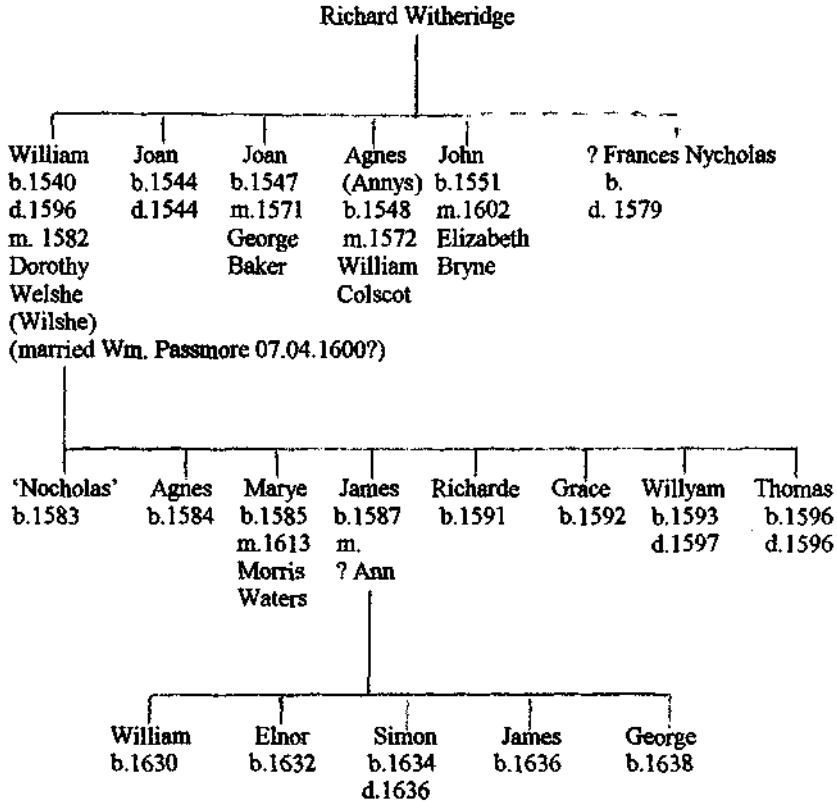


* - Known to be Mariners
 (B) - Barnstaple
 (F) - Fremington
 (L) - London - S. Mary at Hill
 (SB) - St. Bride's Fleet Street, London
 (St) - Stepney, London
 (BT) - Bishop's Tawton

Compiled by J.R. Browne, January 2003 All events from parish registers, leases, Wills and other documents.
 Unaccounted for:- Frances Nycholas Witheridge, buried Barnstaple 1579, Nicholas Witheridge, 'son of Nicholas Buried Banrstaple 1587

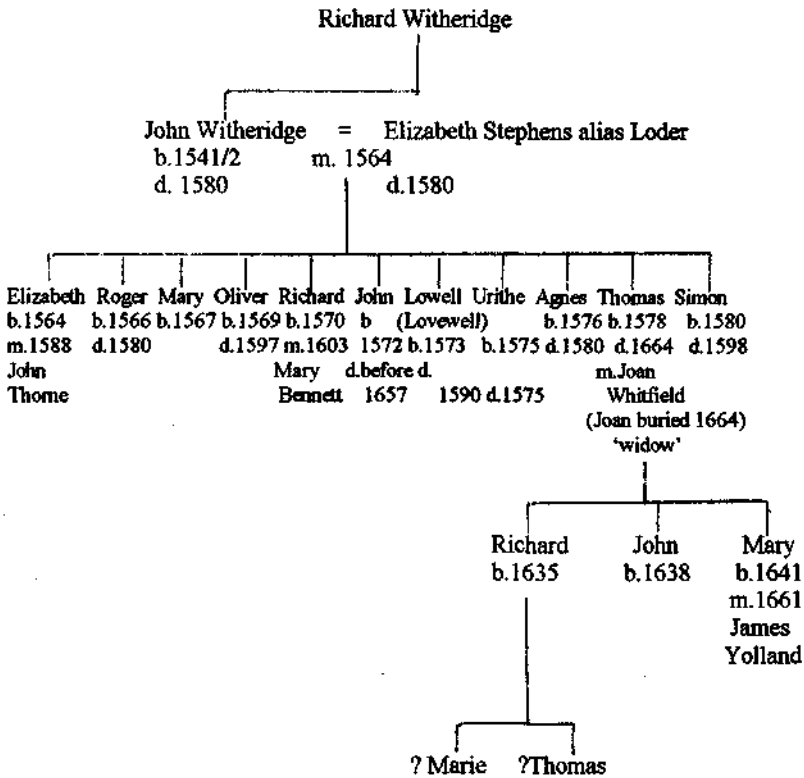


SECTION OF THE BARNSTAPLE FAMILY TREE (1)



All events Barnstaple

SECTION OF THE BARNSTAPLE FAMILY TREE (2)



Lowell Witheridge (Lovewell) b.1573, was buried on 22nd July, 1590, with a Thomas Thome, probably her nephew.

Witheridge Family Re-union

Year 2004

It is proposed to hold a three day re-union on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd May, 2004. The Annual General Meeting (lasting approximately two hours) would be held on the 1st May, 2004, at the Bedford Hotel, Tavistock, South Devon. The hotel offers bed and breakfast accommodation, all rooms with en suite facilities, and evening meals can be obtained. Enquiries are being made to find smaller hotels, and alternative bed and breakfast accommodation in the area.

It is intended to organise trips on the Sunday and Monday, possibly to Devonport Dockyard where we can see the building where Napoleonic prisoners were held and executed, and/or to Plymouth or Morwellham Quay to see the historic port, copper mine, and other displays and relics from the past. We have other venues in mind which might be possible if interest is shown.

If enough interest is shown by members then every effort will be made to bring this event about, but we do need members to reply by JULY 2003. If you are interested in coming please let us know and give an indication of how many are likely to be in your party. Further suggestions concerning trips and activities will be welcome.

Please send your replies to the Membership Secretary:-

Mr. Richard Witheridge
2, Apsley Road,
Newbridge,
Bath,
Somerset BA1 3LP

Or by e-mail: richard@rwitheridge.fsnet.co.uk

MEMOIRS OF R.E. WITHERIDGE CHAPMAN PART IV

Part III ended with Reginald's return to England via Norway after a British expedition to North Russia intended to help the White Russians in their fight against the Bolshevik Revolution.

BLACK SEA - SEA OF MARMARA - H.M DESTROYER "VESPER"

On the 16th January, 1920 I was sent to join the destroyer Vesper, which was lying at anchor at Portland on the coast of England. There were no other ratings with me as she was already in commission. I had a very rough trip in a small launch from the quay side to the ship and was glad to get aboard.

We were away the following day to join up with an Allied Fleet which was in occupation of Turkey at Constantinople - now known as Istanbul. The seas were fairly rough through the Bay of Biscay and I remember that we had to put extra lashings on the torpedo warheads in the magazine below decks. I did not feel too comfortable aboard Vesper for a while, after being used to calm weather up the river Dvina, but the first port of call was Malta where we took on provisions and oil and I suppose the captain got his orders. Discipline aboard destroyers is fairly nominal and there is not much room to stretch your legs, and you can't roam around in rough weather. We used to get 1s.0d. a day known as "hard laying" money and our tot of rum was always neat instead of 3 parts water to the tot of rum that you get on larger ships. I was able to have a good look around Malta, so when I visited again on later occasions I was not a stranger to it.

We left Malta after our initiation and after passing the Isle of Lemnos etc., we came to Cape Helles and Gallipoli.

At Cape Helles there were the wrecks of ships from the previous war, the wreck of a French Naval ship in particular, and one of our naval task forces was busy dismantling Turkish fortifications. We anchored off Chanak for a couple of days and then proceeded on to Constantinople.

After that we returned to the Black Sea and to the port of Batum on the coast of Armenia. We made fast alongside an American destroyer and stayed there for quite a few days.

From Batum we sailed to a place called Novo Rossiysk where there was trouble. When we got there we came across one of our battleships, I think it was the "Orion" of the "Ajax" - I can't remember which one of the two. We were sent around inshore at a fairly fast speed apparently to draw the fire from a shore battery stationed in the town which was on the side of a hill. We certainly drew their fire all

right, but were travelling a bit too fast to get hit by a shore battery, especially a mobile one as this appeared to be. It seemed to move from one street corner to the other.

Then the battleship opened fire with a heavy gun and it looked like one shell, one row of houses. She only fired two or three rounds and we had gone.

I always remember this one as one of our crew drew a cartoon of the Vesper steaming at full speed with a few shells falling astern, and the captain sitting astride "Monkeys island", (the Bridge) with his fingers up to his nose, pointing in the direction of the town.

Another trip we had was along the north coast of Ankara and called at Sinope and Frebiz and where the Turks had been molesting the Armenians. Apparently we just showed our flag at Sinope but at Frebizond a party of Turkish soldier officers had baled up some American women and taken them to an island in the harbour. They were made to release them under threat from our ship, and they were taken ashore. I wouldn't know whether they got hold of them again after we had gone.

Turkish brigands were giving the Armenians a lot of trouble about that time. They would ride into the towns and villages, shoot down any one who resisted, or demanded a ransom, besides taking anything they wanted.

I do not know what we were doing at Batum except using it as a base. I know that the police ashore were armed to the teeth and they were formidable and frightening to look at. There were a couple of young kids who used to hide behind the piles of timber stacked on the wharf and were a bit too smart for the police, although I think the police did not worry about them much. These boys used to come aboard and get some food and go off ashore again. I think there was a young girl of about 11 or 12 years who was mothering them.

After being at Batum for a few weeks we returned to Constantinople. When coming down through the Bosphorus engines have to be shut down to a minimum as the sea runs through fairly swiftly, and as the passage is windy in places it would not do to have too much way on. The houses are built right down to the sea and coming through the Bosphorus is very pretty. There had been a lot of trouble caused by bands of Turks along the coast of the Sea of Marmara, so we were sent up the Gulf of Ismir and chased brigands out of Ismir itself. The landing party was just told to fire in the air, which seemed to be sufficient to get them to buzz off.

The navigation lights were being interfered with on the Asia Minor side of the Sea of Marmara. An armed boat's crew was sent on shore to see to a light at one place, and on the way back were fired at from the shore. They were allowed to get too far

off for the shots to become effective. With the return of the boat the Vesper steamed away but opened fire and spread a couple of rounds of shrapnel across the headland. The light was burning all right after that night.

We had plenty of cherries to eat as the Dh'ons (boats) trading to Constantinople were searched by us for arms and some of them were carrying nothing else but cherries.

Whilst at Constantinople the city was taken over by allied troops, mostly sailors and marines. They were landed at Dolma Bachi by night. It was done by surprise and there was no opposition. The Sultan of Turkey was taken away at the same time. We as a ship's crew did not take part in the landing, and I don't think that any opposition was expected as there was no preparation on board our ship. We were anchored in the harbour not far offshore.

Our sojourn out there this time only lasted six months, and we paid off Vesper at Plymouth on the 24th August, 1920. I stayed at the barracks at Devonport Naval Base until the 12th October, 1920

MEDITERRANEAN STATION - 13TH OCTOBER, 1920 - 8TH FEBRUARY 1923 HMS KING GEORGE VTH

The King George Vth was a battleship with a crew of about 2000 men.

We commissioned it on 13th October, 1920, and as there were no trials to be done by her before leaving we were soon on our way. It was my first experience of "big ship" navy and the discipline was much stricter than what I had been used to on smaller ships.

My job was to look after the electric motors and fans, of which there were quite a few. We had to muster at division twice a day when your name was called out and you were inspected by the division officer. After that you were all marched to the quarter deck and the chaplain would say a prayer, the band played and we would sing a hymn. After that I would not see the upper deck again until "evening quarters" when we all had to change into "night clothing", an evening uniform, and be inspected again, then if you were duty watch you stood by again.

I had to be on duty as L.T.O. and had to test all navigation and signal lights at sea, or if in harbour rig yard arm groups (a group of eight lights inside one reflector) and gangway lights which consisted of a streamer of lights tied onto the gangway rails. Beside that, any failure of electrical gear was reported to a central position and we would have to do the repairs.

One evening I got into trouble for not attending "evening quarters". One of the stokers had been sent up to me to say that one of the CO2 motors on a refrigerating unit was sparking heavily. Instead of reporting to the officer of the watch that I would not be at evening quarters I just carried on to fix the motor and did not report. Of course my name was called and not answered. I was reported absent and found myself in the Commander's report.

Some time during the following morning a special bugle call was sounded, which was for Commander's defaulters to fall in, and you mustered by the defaulters' table. At the table would be the Commander and the defaulters' log book. At one end would be the prosecuting officer and at the other the Master-at Arms. The Master-at-Arms would then read out the charge against you, and the prosecuting officer would state the case. You would step forward, smartly remove your cap, and the Commander would ask you what you had to say. I thought I had a good case and would get away with it, as I thought that I had only done what I should have done, but such was discipline aboard a battleship that as I had not reported that I would be absent from evening quarters I had to take my punishment. I got 7 days 8A, which meant having to do extra work in the dog watch, and having leave stopped. Being a leading hand I had to muster defaulters and see they did the extra work allocated to them.

That was the first time I had been in trouble and I didn't like it a bit.

We called at Gibraltar and Malta for provisions and to coal ship. I worked one of the electric hoists when coaling ship, so did not get very dirty nor did I have to shovel any coal. A collier came alongside the ship and all the seamen crew got into the collier and filled bags with coal, about 10 bags a hoist. One hoist lifted the bags up and the others swung them aboard. There was always a bit of competition between different holds and the coal came in fairly quickly.

Malta is a fairly barren island and the population existed mostly on servicing the British garrison on the island. Food was so scarce that the Maltese would come aboard the ship and scrape up and take away any food left over. We used to say that when we went ashore on leave the same scraps used to be camouflaged a bit and served up to us again. Scraps of food and fish were so scarce that there wasn't a seagull anywhere.

Towards the end of October we arrived at the Dardanelles once more. We anchored opposite Gallipoli at a place called Chanak.

Mustapha Kemal, a fiery Turk, was operating armed forces in Turkey in Asia. He would not recognise any peace treaty. The Turks had cut the water supply from our soldiers stationed at Chanak and we had to supply our soldiers with water from the

ships, sooner than let firing start again. It was touch and go for a while. Our people started re-arming the Dardanelles, but Kemal must have thought better of it in the end as nothing really flared up.

Soon we went to Constantinople where there was a fairly large Allied fleet at anchor with warships from about five different nations. At eight o'clock when the ship's ensigns were hoisted all the bands on the different ships would start playing each other's national anthems. There were British, American, French, Italian, Greek and Japanese ships so that there would be half a dozen anthems. Any one on the upper deck at the time would have to stand to attention whilst they were all being played.

It was much quieter in Constantinople this time than when I was there in HMS Vesper and we were allowed on shore until 10.0 p.m., when off watch.

There were two parts to the city, one part known as Stamboul, and the other known as Galata. Stamboul was the Turkish quarter and was best left to the Turks, it would be asking for trouble to go over the bridge into that part. Galata was very cosmopolitan, consisting of Greeks, Americans and White Russians. With all the different peoples about, living was fairly hectic and a good time was had by all.

The big sports and show ground was off the Rue de Pera. It was built on a hill, and you had to go up the Golden Horn or steps to get to it. We played many a game of soccer against the teams from different Navies up there.

The Americans played mostly baseball among themselves. Different grounds were allotted to each Navy. I remember at one time there was a mix up in the allocation and a little war started up, and the patrols which were about all the time had to break it up.. Each patrol had just to keep its own nationals in order and dare not interfere with the others. Each pub had its own stage and entertained customers, and there was always a saucer with some morsel to eat with every beer you ordered.

I had a mate called 'Nobby' Clarke - a Scottish chap. He had a ventriloquist's doll and we used to go ashore later in the evening when the night life had really started, go into the pubs, and he would perform with this doll. We used to get free beer, and even down by the wharf where the fruit stalls were, we were loaded up with fruit before going aboard.

We went into a theatre one night where some belly dancers were performing, and Nobby had the audience taking more notice of his doll than what was happening on the stage.

I parted company with Nobby later on as we caught him cheating at cards. We used to play Bezique, and found Nobby had marked the cards. As the stakes were a month's wages it was pretty bad.

Constantinople looked very pretty in the evenings, with the sun setting behind its mosques and minarets. I went in to St. Sophia and had to take my shoes off before going in. At the Feast of Ramadan, the monks go up into the minarets, and on a still evening you could hear their chants out in the harbour.

We had nothing much to get excited about, just one or two route marches through the city. I remember on one occasion when we were marching along the Rue de Pera one of our fellows let go of his side of an ammunition box, the lid came off and the box was empty. There were we with fixed bayonets and otherwise looking the part, and no ammunition in the boxes!

An intelligence officer from Russia came aboard and he brought with him a cuddly little bear cub which was adopted as a ship's pet. Like all young animals he was very playful, fairly easily controlled and everyone's favourite whilst still young. In fact he kept to a certain area where he was fed, but the cub did not remain a wee little thing for very long. It was surprising how quickly he grew up. His forearm got as large as Tarzan's thighs and he started to roam everywhere around the ship. It was usual to put food brought from the canteen on the end of the mess tables ready to be taken to the galley - such as eggs for breakfast. It was not long before our friend got wind of this and for a while a few breakfasts and tins of jam went missing.

He took full control all right. He would go up onto the signal deck, take all the flags out of the lockers and make a bed for himself, or frolic about on the ship's awnings making holes in them with his claws.

When the water hoses were running for washing down the decks he would grab a hose and with full pressure on would play it into his mouth or squirt it around and drown everything or anyone around with water. He did not like the hot weather and would spend most of the day in the water at the back of one of the gangways, holding on to an iron stay, but he always knew meal time! Everybody had a go at catching fish for the bear.

That wasn't the end of his lordship's antics. He started swimming around the harbour and a boat would have to be sent nearly down to Stamboul to fetch him back. Then to cap it all he took to going aboard the other ships in the harbour, and next there would be a signal "Come and get your bear". The fellow who used to feed him was always able to get him to come back. I think he must have taken a few fish or a tin of jam to bribe him.

One night while at sea he disappeared. I think it was when we were on the way to Smyrna. He became uncontrollable, and some said that he was tied to a bottom line and dragged in under the ship and drowned. It remained quite a mystery in which way he was got rid of.

At last we got under way under secret orders. It was in September 1922. We were sent to Smyrna (Ismir) a town in Asia Minor. It was mostly held by the Greeks, although there was a part of it held by the Turks. It appears that a Turkish army was marching down through Asia Minor and was expected to march on Smyrna.

There were some British interests in the town. The gas works were a British concern and I think some ship building yards were run by a big British concern. There were a number of British nationals there. We requisitioned a passenger vessel and tried to get them to come on board in case of trouble, but they did not avail themselves of the opportunity.

After about three weeks the Turkish army arrived outside the town ready to storm it. The Greeks had decided to evacuate the town as the two Greek warships that were in harbour weighed anchor and left, just firing a few rounds from the heavy guns at the advance of the Turkish army.

Then early next morning the Turkish army started marching in. I went up in the control tower and was able to get a look at them through the range finder. There were hordes of them, mostly on foot and others on donkeys. Their mobile division seemed to have taken a different route.

Our Captain, Captain Thesiger, went ashore and got in touch with the Turkish commander, told him that the Greeks had evacuated and asked him to take the place over without any conflict. We had sailors ashore guarding the gas works and other British interests.

Some Greek soldiers had swum off to our ship out of the way, but we were not allowed to take them aboard. A boat rope was rigged along the ship's side, and they were allowed to hang on to that. I do not know what happened to them, they either swam back to shore or hung on until they gave up hope. I noticed a big cloud of dust rise into the air from the direction from which they had swum out.

Everything seemed fairly quiet except for one or two rifle shots here and there and the trams started running again. There was one thing I noticed in particular, and that was that the Greek flags were taken down and the Star and Crescent put up instead, and whereas before there was hardly a Turkish Fez (headgear) to be seen, everyone seemed to be wearing one.

Then fire broke out in the town. Some said it was started by people who had taken refuge in a church and had set fire to it sooner than surrender it to the Turks, and others said it was the Turks who started the fire because some people would not come out. It was not long before the whole town was on fire. Most of the population came towards the sea front and as the fire spread either had to go back among the burning buildings or into the sea.

It must have been pre-arranged for the British nationals to gather at a certain place on the quay as they were brought off to our ship by motor boat and barge, and our guards who had been placed at the gas-works were also brought off. There was some trouble in preventing the wrong people from crowding the boats.

We had to keep the search lights showing on the quays all night, and it was a dramatic sight to see the walls of big buildings collapsing as the fire licked through them, and see the numerous small explosions caused by exploding oil drums etc.

There was a motor boat requisitioned by a few Turkish soldiers which was travelling about the harbour and capsizing some of the boats in which Greeks and Americans were trying to get away by sea. I do not remember how long we stayed after the refugees had been taken on board. Some of them were in a pitiful state and highly shocked. I was informed that although things appeared fairly quiet for the few days prior to the big fire, the Turkish soldiers had been indulging in an orgy of rape and looting. Part of the ship had been put out of bounds for us and allocated to the refugees, and they were made as comfortable as possible although far removed from the comfort and luxury that some of them had been used to.

We must have sailed for Malta as fast as we could go. Maybe the navigator cut a couple of corners on the way out of Smyrna harbour as we ran over an uncharted rock and had to go into dry dock when we arrived. Whilst in dry dock we went through a course of rifle and pistol fire at the garrison range.

The remainder of HMS King George's commission on the Mediterranean station was more peaceful. We had two pleasurable cruises before returning home. One itinerary was a cruise to Alexandria, Port Said, Tel Aviv, (the capital of Israel), which comprised only a very few buildings and a lot of marquees and tents, Haifa, Tripoli in Palestine, and Famugusta in Cyprus. On the other cruise we visited Piraeas, Athens, and Corfu, Palermo, Givita Vecchia in Italy. It would take a whole book to explain about all these places. I should have kept a diary at the time.

We paid off HMS King George Vth at Devonport, England, on the 8th February, 1923 and I returned to HMS Defiance, my depot ship.

1923 -1926 NEW ZEALAND - HMS CHATHAM AND HMS DUNEDIN

My stay in home waters was of brief duration. After three months, I was to sail for New Zealand.

Volunteers from men with good characters and ability had been asked to go to New Zealand where a new Navy was to be formed. Whilst on HMS Cordelia one of the older seamen had told me about the good time he had had on the Australian station

on a survey ship before the war, and I had always had a wish to go out that way, and so it happened on 12th July 1923.

I left Devonport, England, to join SS Cordinthia at Southampton in which I was to sail to New Zealand to join HMS Chatham which was already in NZ waters. The voyage took 5 weeks, and was uneventful and rather boring. Except for inspection and physical training in the mornings there was nothing else to do all day. I joined my ship in Wellington - it rained off and on for about five weeks and I was not impressed. First impressions were not favourable, and a declaration of my intentions to stay in NZ was in the negative. As time went by my thoughts about New Zealand changed. Most of the population at that time were from the old country, and the remainder of European first generation New Zealanders. When talking about the British Isles they always referred to them as 'home' and everywhere the ship went we were welcomed and folk entertained us or took us into their homes. It was a lovely country with lovely people, and even the Maori natives were patriotic and were proud to belong to Britain. We spent most summer months cruising around NZ ports and in the winter would cruise around the Pacific islands and return home via Australian ports.

Naval discipline was firm without being strict for us sailors from the Royal Navy and less firm for the NZ recruits whom we had on board for training. We would give searchlight displays in all the ports we visited and soccer and cricket matches and boxing tournaments were generally arranged. One event, whilst on the Chatham, which always sticks in my mind was that when we were at New Plymouth to open a new wharf we pulled away a few of the piles on berthing.

In May 1923 HMS Dunedin arrived in NZ and replaced HMS Chatham which returned to England. There were also two other Royal Navy ships in NZ waters. They were HMS Laburnum and HMS Veronica. They were employed on survey work and we didn't see much of them.

I was transferred to HMS Dunedin and a lot of the other sailors from HMS Chatham had a free discharge in NZ or returned home. At that time the Royal Navy was being cut back - hence the reason for the free discharge.

It was a treat to be on board an oil burning ship again with no coaling of ship to be done. There was a surplus of torpedo ratings on HMS Dunedin and I had to do duties as seaman leading hand. It was a change for me and I really enjoyed it. I was coxswain of the duty whaler's crew and so able to get a fair amount of sailing it, and more time in the fresh air.

Whilst ashore in Wellington several of us used to go to evenings at the British Sailors Mission. There I met my wife Ruby, who was a helper, and I became

engaged. We were married in St. James' Church in Lower Hutt on 29th April, 1925.

My time on the Dunedin was to expire in January, 1926, when I was to return to England to complete my time in the Royal Navy - which would be another 18 months.

Being married, and having such a liking for New Zealand and the people, I did not want to return home. After all I did not know a great deal about the old country especially the civilian side of it, as I had seen so little of it since my school days. He only way for me to stay in New Zealand was to buy my discharge. If I returned to England and came back to New Zealand after my discharge from the Navy in 18 months it would cost me more than discharge by purchase. So I decided to give it a go.

The commodore of HMS Dunedin offered to make me a petty officer if I did not proceed with my intentions, but it was of no avail. I got in touch with Tommy Wilford who was M.P. for Hutt, and later High Commissioner in London, told him my circumstances, and asked if he could do anything for me. I was pleased when word came through that my request had been granted. I was in Dunedin hospital at the time recuperating from an operation for appendicitis and returned to the ship to get my discharge from the Navy on 16th January 1926.

I remember when making application for my discharge, I had to get it signed by a magistrate. He thought it strange that I should have to pay for my discharge, and said that they should pay me instead of me having to pay them. I had to agree to join the Royal Fleet reserve for 12 years on my discharge. This compelled me to do seven days drill each year whilst on the Reserve which I did on HMS Dunedin, Diomedes and Achilles, being discharged from the RFR at the age of 40 in June 1938 and being awarded a gratuity of one hundred pounds for which I received 120 pounds in New Zealand.

A NEW LIFE

To start life again after being in the Navy was hard. I had practically no experience of civilian life and work on shore. Two of my mates who had had free discharge from HMS Chatham had obtained work with NZ Railways. I had been in contact with them since they had been discharged and one, Ted Burley, had told me to apply to the Railways for a job. This I did, and so I began on my first job.

My first job was converting the railway stations from gas to electric lighting. It started off in Wellington where we did the Lambton and Thomdon stations and so worked our way up the line until we got to Shannon.

When we reached Shannon we had to live in huts which were shunted about during the night. I realised that this job was more for single men so I returned to Wellington one day and told the boss that I was leaving as I had thought the work was to be in Wellington. He said that he had thought I would not stick it and that the Wellington district stretched from Nelson to Napier. Then I obtained a provisional wireman's licence from the engineer of the H.V.E.P.B. and did a bit of work in the Hutt. From there I applied for work with the Wellington City Council electricity department.

The change over to the national electricity supply had just started about that time and I started work with the WCC. The city at that time was supplied from a small power station in Harris Street which, after the new supply was available, was closed down. It took about eight years to complete the change over and I stayed with the WCC for ten years. This took me through the big depression without having to go on relief, for which I was very thankful. We had a home built here in Petone and had a mortgage to pay off, which took us nineteen years. We lived in rooms before our home was built, the rooms were in Queen's Crescent, Lower Hutt, in the main street where a motor dealer's place now is, and where the De Luxe theatre was previously.

Our daughter Joyce was born at Avalon in Lower Hutt on 26th August, 1926.

After leaving WCC I worked for H.V.E.P.B. for a short while but as there had been one or two fatalities amongst their workmen I left them and went to work for Ford Motor Company.

The second world war was then on and as I was out of the naval reserve and too old to be conscripted I joined the emergency fire service (E.F.S). Training was done with the Petone Fire Brigade and Hutt Park Motor Camp where we had trailer pumps. There was only one big fire whilst I was in the E.F.S. which was at U.E.B. factory in Cuba Street, Petone.

Our daughter Thelma was born at St. Helen's maternity hospital on 11th October, 1931.

It was not all work and no play in the early years of life in NZ. During the summer I used to go pig hunting or rabbit shooting. We hunted pigs in Wainuiomata, Tunnel Gully (Kiatoke) and Waiarongamai (Western Lake) Cross Creek (Featherson), Bull Hill (Pirinma) and Tuaruas (Bill Ure's Country).

We went rabbit shooting when the country was overrun with rabbits and heaps of rabbits would be left in different paddocks as we shot our way along. When pig shooting we would sometimes go on our bicycles if to Wainuiomata or if in the

Wairarapa put our bicycles on the train and dogs in dog boxes, get off at Featherstone and bike the remainder of the way. We had varying success, sometimes we had as much meat as we could carry, other times not so lucky but it was always enjoyable in the bush.

We had a great experience on one occasion. It was on a Boxing Day coming back from hunting in from Hamua. We had to come up a cattle track from a river bed in an old Model T. Petrol was running a bit low and as it was a gravity fed car it was decided to come up backwards. Two of us got out and walked. The driver Roy Giles and the dogs were in the car when it went off the track on to the side with about a forty foot drop. Bill Ure and I dug away part of the bank to prevent the old car from falling and Roy had to sit still in the car until a farmer had finished his milking so that he could bring his tractor along to pull the car out. The car came out quite smoothly as we had dug a track for the wheels and luckily the tractor took up the load straight away.

We used to go fishing in a rowing boat out on the Bay Bank off Point Howard, the Mill bank, off the Woollen Mill or down off the Hurt Road. It kept us fairly fit.

In the winter I used to play soccer a lot, in fact I played until I was forty six years of age. Now I am just the reserve. I follow rugby and seldom go to see a soccer match.

My wife Ruby and I have been married now for fifty years. She has been a great help and comfort to me and more so now that we are getting older.

We have had one or two disappointments but our life together has been much better or less worse than many marriages these days. The friends that we have made have been lifetime friends and our thoughts are always of them.

Joyce and Thelma both have families and we have six grand children and four great grandchildren up till now.

Now Mum and I are taking it easy and hope that we have made no enemies. We have always tried to help everyone and will continue to give help if needed. We have been able to have a good look at New Zealand and a little further afield on occasions.

I have never regretted the way my life has turned out to be. Perhaps I have not made much of a mark in life, but it is not possible for everyone to be more than ordinary.

It has been sufficient for me to live and honest and clean life, to be a good citizen and be a worthy New Zealander, the country of my adoption and a country pioneered by the great nation in which I was born and fought for.

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The Membership Secretary
Mr. Richard Witheridge

Address on inside front cover

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