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The magazine of the
Witheridge
Family History Society

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Assistant Editor (temporary Editor and Publisher)	Mrs Kim Cook <i>Address as for Honorary Life President</i>

Please submit items for future issues of Witheridge Times to the Editor, email Editor@WitheridgeFHS.com

continued on inside back cover

The logo on the front cover shows the boundaries of the county of Devon, with black dots for the town of Witheridge and the manor of Witheridge, both listed in the Domesday Book.

WITHERIDGE TIMES

Volume 24

Spring 2010

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Letter from the

Honorary Life President



Firstly, I'd like to thank all those who responded to our first-ever e-mailed issue of *Witheridge Times*. It was good to know that it reached so many of you safely, and to realise how much you appreciated receiving the news and updates, despite the fact that most of the content related to 2008! Only two members reported difficulty with the file – one because broadband isn't available in the area, and the other because of an over-tight security system that won't accept wrapped files! Both will now be getting unstitched paper copies. The servers of everyone else who responded accepted the file size without difficulty. To keep to this file size, as this issue has more pages, it has fewer illustrations.

To those who haven't confirmed receipt of the last issue, please do confirm receipt of this second catch-up issue of *Witheridge Times*. If we don't have a confirmed e-mail address, copies of the magazine, as well as copies of official notices, may be considerably delayed. We will also need confirmation of your current e-mail address if you wish to register with our Membership Secretary for an e-mail vote at the AGM.

Next, I should explain the presentation of the information about last year's AGM. Although the Agenda and Officers' Reports were sent out by mail, these have not appeared in any issue of *Witheridge Times* – something essential for future reference. The Officers' Reports are therefore included before the AGM details. To avoid duplication, I have combined the Agenda (in standard type) with the Minutes (in italics), and added some essential supplementary notes (in smaller italics) relating to subsequent events.

It's great to see that our appeal for volunteers to help us run the Society has brought a good response, with nominations for most posts, the notable exception being Secretary. Anyone else nominated at, or before the AGM, may be co-opted by the Committee.

Also, I'm delighted to say that our Committee has ratified the proposal to extend all subscriptions by one year, to make up for the lack of communication. This second 'catch-up' issue of *Witheridge Times*, has, of necessity, been crammed with details of this year's AGM and Reunion, along with reports of last year's AGM. However, I've tried to balance it with family news and a short article. This issue will again be emailed, with unstitched printed copies going to those for whom we

have no email address. Continuing with e-mailed issues is something we will be considering at the AGM, with alternatives for those not on broadband. If we can move forward in this way, it will help both members and our budget!

Finally, I apologise for the delay in completing this issue. Roy and I have both been ill. Roy's had recurrent bouts of a condition known as LPV, affecting the inner ear and causing nausea and dreadful problems with balance. I'm pleased to say he is now much better, but further treatment may be needed to reduce the risk of more attacks.

This long, cold winter, the worst in the UK for decades, has not been kind to people, like me, with lung problems. Eventually I succumbed to bronchitis, which persisted for over a month and left me very weak. The month lost from work and other schedules, including that for *Wetheridge Times*, has been a great worry, but there was nothing I could do until my strength returned. With the advent of warmer weather (well, slightly!) and some sunshine, I'm getting back on track.

One advantage of this delay is that we can now include the AGM Agenda, and a booking form (below), which should be returned to me.

We're now looking forward to our Reunion and AGM here in June, which we hope will be a very relaxed and enjoyable occasion.

With my love and very best wishes to you all

Kim Cook

Tenterden, Kent

April 2010

2010 Reunion & AGM Booking Form

I/we will be attending the 2010 Reunion & AGM in Tenterden.

No of adults:

No of children

No of adults opting for alternative Saturday programme

I/we will/will not be staying for the Sunday programme.

Preferred options for outing: 1

2 3

I/we regret we will not be attending the 2010 Reunion & AGM

Name(s)

Address

.

Witheridge Family History Society

2010 Reunion and AGM

Date: Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 June 2010

Venue: Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6NS

Email: witheridge1987@aol.com

Timetable

Saturday 12 June

- 10.00 am - 11.00 am **Welcome and coffee**
- 11.00 am - 12.00 noon **AGM¹ Alternative programmes for children² and non-members³ to be advised.**
- 12.00 noon - 1.00 pm **Regroup, chat, and refresh before lunch.**
- 1.00 pm - 2.00 pm **Lunch** (local pub lunch or buffet lunch on site).
- 2.00 pm - 3.00 pm **Question Time** – put your questions about family history, Witheridge or others, to a professional family historian.
- 3.00 pm - 5.00 pm **Family Time** – find yourself on family trees, check family pedigrees, catch up with old friends, and make new ones. Refreshments will be served at about 4.00 pm.
- 5.00 pm **President's closing address**
- 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm **Evening meal together, possibly barbecue** (weather permitting).

¹ *All paid-up members of the Witheridge FHS who are 16 or over will be entitled to vote at the AGM. Non-members and under-16s are welcome to attend the AGM, but may not vote.*

² *Throughout the day there will be a creche for children, run by a registered child-minder and qualified first-aider. However, depending on the number of children present, it may be necessary for a parent to help, in order to maintain the correct adult:child ratios.*

³ *Options for non-members (dependent on weather conditions) include: a guided tour of Tenterden town centre with its many listed buildings; a visit to Tenterden Museum (see Places of Interest, below); or relaxing on-site (weather permitting, in the garden).*

Sunday 13 June

10.00 am

Meet for outing, sharing cars. **Local Places of Interest**, and some a little **Further Afield**, are listed on the following pages. Those planning to attend and stay till Sunday will be asked to indicate their first three choices, in order of preference, and we will visit the one that is voted favourite.

1.00 pm approx

Lunch. Many of the visit options have refreshment facilities, or we could book Sunday lunch in a local hostelry.

Afternoon

No formal arrangements, but guests are welcome to linger and chat if they wish.

There is no charge for attending the Reunion, but all those attending will be responsible for paying for their own meals, and for any charges in connection with outings.

Tenterden

Tenterden is justifiably renowned as ‘the jewel of the Weald’. Its broad, leafy High Street, charmingly lined by Tudor, Georgian, Regency and Victorian buildings, is overlooked by the tower of historic St Mildred’s church, dating from the 12th century.

While many major retail chains are represented, there are still plenty of independent retailers, often in quirky, historic premises. The town, once very close to the sea, has been a member of the Confederation of Cinque Ports since 1499, and is always represented at the Coronation of the monarch. Famous former residents include William Caxton (said to have been born in Tenterden); Horatia Nelson Ward, daughter of Admiral Lord Nelson, whose husband, Philip Ward, was Vicar of Tenterden; and actress Dame Ellen Terry. Tucked away at the end of Recreation Ground Road is a modern Leisure Centre with pools and gym, and there is a wide variety of cuisine available in the town’s many cafés, bars, and restaurants.



Tenterden High Street, with St Mildred’s church tower, the 15th-century Woolpack Inn, and the Town Hall.

Accommodation

Hotels:

Collina House Hotel, 5 East Hill, Tenterden, Kent TN 30 6RL

Tel: +44 (0)1580 764852/764004

Web-site: www.collinahousehotel.co.uk

Private family-run hotel, 17 e/s rooms, off main road, yet close to High Street. Excellent cuisine, Swiss-trained chef.

Little Silver Country Hotel, Ashford Road, St Michael's, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6SP

Tel: +44 (0)1233 850321

Web-site: www.little-silver.co.uk

16 luxury e/s rooms, some whirlpool or four-poster, Oaks restaurant, quality food, excellent wines. Beautiful gardens.

London Beach Country Hotel & Golf Club, Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HX

Tel: +44 (0)1580 766279.

Web-site: www.londonbeach.com

Best Western hotel with spa, health club and golf course, set in 100 acres of parkland. WiFi access throughout. 24 luxury e/s rooms, some with balcony. Bar, restaurant, and sunny conservatory.

White Lion Hotel, 57 High Street, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6BD

Tel: +44 (0)1580 765077 Web-site: www.marstonsinns.co.uk/Tenterden/White-Lion-Tenterden

Town-centre 16th-century coaching inn, recently refurbished. 16 rooms, some four-poster, some quirky! Restaurant and bar, with fresh local food, and wide selection of wines and beers.

Bed and Breakfast:

Tower House, 27 Ashford Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6LL

Tel: +44 (0)1580 761920. Web-site: www.towerhouse.biz

Elegant Grade II listed home with 2 spacious double/twin/family rooms. Full English breakfast with local produce.



Top to bottom: Collina House Hotel; Little Silver Country Hotel; London Beach Country Hotel; White Lion Hotel

The White Cottage, Ashford Road, St Michael's, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6NS
Tel: +44(0)1233 850583.

Website: www.thewhitecottagebedandbreakfast.co.uk

Single, double and twin rooms, some e/s, Wi-fi access, separate guest entrance and lounge, gardens.

Camping & Caravans:

Woodlands Park, Tenterden Road, Biddenden, Kent TN27 8BT Tel: 01580 291216 Web-site: www.campingsite.co.uk

Level grassy site, electric hook-ups, award-winning shower block, site shop, fishing lakes (one shown right).



Places of Interest

Chapel Down Winery, Tenterden Vineyard, Small Hythe, Tenterden, Kent TN30 7NG.

Tel: +44 (0)1580 763033/766111. Web-site: www.englishwinesgroup.co.uk

25 acres of vines, gardens, herb garden, and winery producing still and sparkling wines. Food store selling Chapel Down wines, beers, local ciders, and fine English produce including cheeses, chutneys, fish, meat, and much more. Children's picture trail. Award-winning restaurant, using plenty of fresh Kentish produce. Free parking.

Kent & East Sussex Railway, Tenterden Town Station, Station Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HE

Tel: +44 (0)1580 765155. Web-site: www.kesr.org.uk

Historic light steam railway wending from Tenterden through 10½ miles of Rother Valley countryside to Bodiam (approx 50 mins each way), on-board refreshments, and some luxury Pullman dining. Refreshment rooms, gift shop and children's play area at Tenterden, loco yard at Rolvenden, and Bodiam Castle (National Trust). Free parking at Tenterden and Northiam.

Smallhythe Place, Small Hythe, Tenterden, Kent TN30 7NG

Tel: +44 (0)1580 762334 See National Trust, www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Early 16th-century house, built when Small Hythe was a thriving port, and now owned by National Trust. Exhibition of ship-building days, and a fascinating collection of theatre costumes and memorabilia linked with former owner, actress Dame Ellen Terry. The grounds include rose garden, orchard, nuttery and famous Barn Theatre, still used regularly. Licensed Barn Theatre Café has home-made and locally-sourced refreshments. Quiz, trail, activity packs and tracker packs for children. Limited free parking, or use winery car park opposite.

Tenterden Museum, Station Road, Tenterden, Kent TN30 6HN
Tel: +44 (0)1580 764310 Web-site: www.tenterdemuseum.co.uk

Weather-boarded gem with an amazing array of local artefacts and history. The Entrance Room has an exhibition on the Cinque Ports, ship-building at Small Hythe, archaeological finds, and a shop with historic postcards, books and maps. A Victorian Room, a Tapestry Room featuring 14 local history panels made by children in 1974, and exhibits from local potteries, tannery, brewery, police and fire brigade. Upstairs is an agricultural room featuring a hop press, and a building room with examples of local building techniques, including mathematical tiles and Kent peg tiles.

Further Afield

Biddenden Vineyard & Cider Works, Little Whatmans, Biddenden, Kent TN27 8DF Tel: 01580 291933 Web-site: www.biddendenvineyards.com

22 acres of vines, producing still and sparkling wines, special Kent ciders and farm-pressed apple juice, made from locally-grown apples, food shop specialising in local produce, coffee shop, picnic area.

C M Booth Collection of Historic Vehicles, Falstaff Antiques, 63-67 High Street, Rolvenden, Kent TN17 4LP

Tel: 01580 241234 Web-site: www.morganmuseum.org.uk

Amazing personal collection, ranging from the only known Humber Tri-Car (1904), and 20 Morgans (1913-36), to bicycles from 1880, motorbikes from 1911, a 1936 caravan and much more. Also toy and model cars, old petrol pumps, signs, and garage equipment.

Great Dixter House and Gardens, Great Dixter, Northiam, E Sussex TN31 6PH Tel: 01797 252878 Web-site: www.greatdixter.co.uk

Timber-framed hall house, built c 1450, retaining ancient hammer-beams and much of the original structure, with later additions by Edward Lutyens. Colourful gardens developed by the late Christopher Lloyd, with orchard meadow, long border, topiary, sunken and exotic gardens. Nursery, gift shop with garden tools, sundries, books, etc. Light refreshments available.

Rare Breeds Centre and Country Farm Park, Woodchurch, Kent TN26 3RJ Tel: +44 (0)1233 861457 Web-site: www.rarebreeds.org.uk

Over 100 acres of countryside adventure and fun for all ages. Farm animals, butterfly tunnel, walk-through aviary, pig racing, indoor play barns, outdoor play areas, aerial walkways and fort, trailer rides, birds of prey, mysterious marsh venture trail, woodland quiz, sculpture trail, discovery garden, secret lake, award-winning restaurant, plant nursery, crafts, and gift shop. Owned and run by Canterbury Oast Trust, providing homes and occupational opportunities for adults with learning difficulties.

AGM 2010 – Reports and Agenda

Officers' Reports, 2009-2010

Chairman's Report

by Richard Witheridge

At the 2009 Reunion and AGM there was considerable discussion on the future of the Witheridge FHS. It was agreed that some change was going to be necessary.

I must admit that prior to the 2009 meeting I did have some doubts as to whether we could go on without some additional input from younger members, as some post holders were standing down, and initially there was no indication of who might replace them.

Following a great deal of work undertaken by our Hon President Kim Cook, we now have nominations for most of the posts. I have agreed to stand for some of the posts which do not require attendance at the meetings as I find travelling more difficult and time seems to be taken up more and more with the family. As a result, I will now be relinquishing the Chairman's post, and standing as Deputy Chairman for the coming year.

Despite our best efforts, as I write this we still have no nomination for Secretary, and there are two vacancies for Committee Members. We continue to work on this, and I trust that we will at least have a nomination for the post of Secretary by the time the AGM arrives.

We also have a number of proposals which should help simplify the future working of the Witheridge FHS, and promote the Society's growth. These will need to be agreed at the 2010 AGM, and I trust they will have your support.

I hope the membership will now work with us to make the Witheridge FHS strong so that we can carry on for a long time to come.

Dunster, 22 April 2010

Secretary's Report

As we have been without a Secretary this year, we cannot provide a Secretary's Report. However, in order to update members, our Hon President Kim Cook has provided the following report.

The lack of an elected Secretary has been a serious impediment to the functioning of the Witheridge FHS this year. In particular, it has been impossible for the lengthy and complicated consultation process on the possible restructuring of the Society, which was agreed at last year's AGM, to go ahead within the specified time-scale. In consequence, some amendment will be necessary at this year's AGM.

Of necessity, I have picked up some of the essential duties, particularly those relating to preparations for the AGM and Reunion. While this made sense, as our home is to be the venue, I was unable to undertake anything other than the basic essentials, mainly because of health problems and other responsibilities both within and outside the Society.

Additionally, I am not, by any means, Secretary material! Minute taking is certainly not my forté, and I have done the best I can with the recording of last year's extended AGM (all 2¾ hours of it!), playing it repeatedly to ensure that the minutes are as fair and accurate a summary of events as possible.

In all the Secretary's tasks I have done, I have been greatly supported and encouraged by many members, particularly those who have agreed to stand for election this year. To all of you, I give my heartfelt thanks. For any failings, errors and omissions, which are entirely mine, I apologise.

The task of Secretary isn't onerous, particularly if AGM and Reunion planning is kept simple, with people making their own accommodation and travel arrangements. Additionally, I should add that AGMs are rarely as long and complicated as last year's, and the time allotted for this year's AGM is a much more manageable 1 hour. I'm hoping that, by the time of the AGM, we will have received a nomination for the post of Secretary. Whoever agrees to take this on will, of course, have every support and assistance from other Committee members that he or she may need.

Should no nomination be received, the Federation of Family History Societies has offered to help us find a Secretary. In order to cover such a possibility, the AGM proposal to widen membership has been extended to include non-Witheridges who volunteer to help us in times of difficulty. We will also need to re-instate our membership of the Federation, and a proposal for this is also on the table for the AGM.

Tenterden, 22 April 2010

Membership Secretary's Report

by Beryl Witheridge

Since taking over the Membership Secretary's role in July 2009, membership seems to have come almost to a standstill. I have only received thirty-two membership subscriptions for 2009 and six (so far) for 2010 from a total membership of fifty-five.

However, one piece of good news is that we have a new member. I would like to welcome Elizabeth Davey to the Witheridge Family History Society. Elizabeth is part of the Totnes family which is really exciting

– up to this point, Paul and I were beginning to despair of ever seeing another member from the same Totnes family as ourselves.

I took on the position of Membership Secretary for one year only to allow time for someone else to be found. Unfortunately, during this time, health and personal matters have taken on a major role in our lives forcing society business to take a back seat, for which I am very sorry.

On that note, I shall soon pass the Society's membership records on to the incoming Membership Secretary and hope that his or her upcoming year of office is more fruitful than mine.

Marlow, 25 April 2010

Treasurer's Report

by Beryl Witheridge

As this will be my last report as Treasurer since taking over in 2006, I am pleased to say that the Society's accounts are relatively healthy and I would like to thank all those who have supported me during these four years.

Activity on the account during this past financial year has been low, with very little coming in or going out.

I shall submit the accounts for audit as soon as the May bank statement is received, which will be twelve months from the previous set of accounts. The audited statement will be available to the AGM but I will also upload them to the 'Members Only' area of the website, so that members who cannot travel to the AGM can view them before the meeting on 12 June.

Marlow, 25 April 2010

Editor's Report

by Paul Witheridge (UK)

Having been sacked as editor (quite fairly, as I did not manage to publish any magazines during this year), this should really be headed 'Ex-editor's report'. Kim Cook, the Assistant Editor, has taken over and I wish her good fortune with the future of *The Witheridge Times*.

At the start of the year I was quite confident that I could produce three issues and had ambitious plans for a series of three major articles of my own. However, some health issues and, perhaps more importantly, motivational issues combined to subvert this confidence. The first of my three planned articles covered the initial segment of a visit to Canada and included a detailed tree for the Bradworthy Family. I'd really like to thank all those who provide family history input to this. I still hope to finish it, but having my efforts at drawing a family tree spread over twelve magazine pages described as pretty much the worst genealogical tree ever stopped me dead in my tracks.

I'd also like to point out that the Society has reached a point where the only people contributing material to the magazine are Joyce Browne and Kim Cook, and even their contributions have slowed to a trickle. If you want your magazine to survive, you must be prepared to put something into it.

Marlow, 25 April 2010

[Chairman's note: Paul Witheridge was not sacked as Editor. While it might be possible to remove a Committee member from office in certain circumstances, this would have to be done through the process set out in Section 6:15 of the Constitution. This process was not invoked at any time by any member of the Society. The arrangements made for the publication of a catch-up issue (which in the event had to be divided into two parts, one for 2008 and one for 2009), were intended to be temporary, with a view to Paul resuming his duties as and when he felt able to. He has subsequently made it clear that he does not wish to resume his post as Editor. RW]

Webmaster's Report

by Paul Witheridge (Canada)

2009-10 has been another quiet year for announcements to the Society.

Kathy and I were unable to attend the 2009 Reunion and AGM so were unable to take any pictures and none were submitted. No other "happenings" or research resources were submitted for web publication in the interim since and until recent sparse postings of the 2010 meeting information.

No suggestions or criticisms were received either. I have received the invoice to renew the domain registration for another year but have not received instructions to proceed since 2010 is to be a year of 'free subscription' and the domain registration fee constitutes our subscription fee.

I am pleased to report that a Google search of 'Witheridge' found us now at 8th place, up from 20th place. Adding 'family history' to the search string brings us up third and fourth.

I again look forward to this year's discussion on the future of The Witheridge Family History Society and how it might impact our website.

Sarnia, 17 April 2010

Research Co-ordinator's Report

by Kim Cook

It would be easy to assume that, as a result of all the Society's researches since 1987, and the researches of some individual members going back to the early 1960s, little remains to be discovered about our Witheridge ancestors.

This is definitely not the case. There is a wealth of new information available, particularly via the Internet. Some of this is sound, primary

source material, but all researchers need to be very discerning, to discriminate between this, and the secondary and tertiary source information which can be at best, uncertain, and at worst, downright rubbish. As more and more of those researching their family history uncover discrepancies, societies such as the Witheridge FHS come into their own, with our ability to guide members and correct any mistakes in their research.

Among the best primary sources to come on-line during the past couple of years are the growing numbers of parish register records, many of them in facsimile form. With no cost to the Society, I have been collecting and collating these as they have become available, along with additional sources of military, immigration, criminal and other records.

Unfortunately, copyright regulations mean that I cannot pass these on in their original form. However, by incorporating the evidence from these documents into files I have already compiled, I can create new documents which then become my copyright, which I am free to use in the context of the Witheridge FHS. Much of this material will be finding its way into the *Witheridge Times*.

As in previous years, I have had a budget of £50.00 to spend on documents for the Society. This year, with the approval of the Society's Treasurer, I have slightly exceeded the budget, having spent £52.50 on 15 documents at £3.50 each. These include 5 Royal Navy Seamen's Records (**John James Witheridge**, **Frederick John Witheridge**, **William James Witheridge**, **John Sampton [sic] Witheridge** and **Wallace Witheridge Hannaford**), 3 Recommendations for Honours and Awards (Army) relating to Captain (later Major) **George Witheridge**, 6 wills (**Arthur Witheridge** 1855, **John Witheridge** 1823, **John Witheridge** 1820, **Sarah Witheridge** 1855, **Sophia Witheridge** 1851, and **Thomas Witheridge** 1785), and an Admon Abstract for **Mary Witheridge** (1808). Information from them has been particularly helpful in many ways and, again, will form the basis of articles for future issues of *Witheridge Times*.

These purchases were chosen from a much greater selection of primary-source records now available which would be of great interest and value to the Society, and I trust a similar budget will be available to enable us to purchase more documents in the current year.

I have continued to update and augment the collection of Enhanced Narrative Pedigrees and also my collection of Parish Profiles.

Many of these records and files will be on display at the Reunion and AGM. I hope that our more relaxed programme this year will give members plenty of time to browse through them.

Tenterden, 20 April 2010

Roy Cook

Proposed by: Alan Smith

Seconded by: Alison Smith

7 Overseas Representatives

The following agreed to continue as the Society's Overseas Representatives, and the Society is delighted to accept their offer.

Australia: Judith and Allan Witheridge

New Zealand: Velma Metcalfe

North America: Kathy Witheridge

8 Appointment of Auditor

It has been proposed that Ron Dixon be appointed as auditor again, now that he has recovered from the injuries which made it impossible for him to audit our accounts last year. Ron has agreed to undertake this again, should the Society wish him to do so.

9 Vote of thanks to retiring Officers

Proposed by: Kim Cook; Seconded by: Pamela Glynn

A special vote of thanks be recorded to Paul and Beryl Witheridge for all their hard work in recent years, with an appropriate gift.

10 Proposal to revoke the effects of Item 9 (Referendum) from the 2009 AGM

Proposed by: Brenda Dixon; Seconded by: Roy Cook

The Society, recognising the *de facto* failure to implement the referendum within the time-scale agreed, as a consequence of not having a Secretary during the past year, shall revoke the decision to hold a referendum, with a view to re-examining the situation at the 2011 AGM.

11 Proposal to amend Section 4 of the Constitution as follows, in order to widen membership

Proposed by: Jason Cook; Seconded by: Richard Witheridge

a) Proposal to amend the opening paragraph of Section 4 of the Constitution as follows:

'Membership is, subject to the discretion of the Executive Committee, open to anyone bearing the name of Witheridge or Wetheridge, or a recognised variant thereof, [and] to anyone descended from someone of that name, and also to anyone related by marriage to any Witheridge/Wetheridge family, or having strong ties to a Witheridge/Wetheridge family, and the[ir] partners of anyone eligible for membership.'

The effect of this would be to allow descendants of Witheridge/Wetheridge step-children, and descendants of families who

had married into a Witheridge/Wetheridge family to join the Society. Such people share ancestry with other members of the Society, although not necessarily in the Witheridge/Wetheridge lines, and therefore share research interests. It would also allow the families of people with other close ties, eg having served alongside a Witheridge/Wetheridge in the armed forces or marine services, with consequent shared research interests, to join the Society.

b) Proposal to amend Section 4.3 of the Constitution as follows:

'Honorary membership of the Society may be conferred at the discretion of the Executive Committee, in order to admit to the Society an individual who is not otherwise eligible for Membership but has nevertheless rendered a significant service to the Society, or who will assist the Witheridge FHS by fulfilling an administrative role (eg Secretary or Membership Secretary), subject to the proviso that only two Committee posts may be held at any one time by people admitted for administrative purposes.'

The effect of this would be to allow someone not otherwise eligible for membership to be admitted to membership in order to fulfil duties which existing members are unable to undertake.

12 Proposal to amend section 7.5 of the Constitution as follows to include on-line voters in the quorum for a General Meeting

Proposed by: Joyce Browne; Seconded by: Maureen Witheridge

'A quorum of eight voting members is necessary to constitute a General Meeting, this quorum to include all members who have registered for an on-line vote, whether or not those registered to vote on-line ultimately exercise their right to vote, and subject always to the proviso that at least 4 members of the Society be physically present at the AGM.'

The effect of this would be to include those who register for on-line voting in the quorum, and thus reduce the number of members required to be physically present, while ensuring that sufficient are physically present to ensure the accurate counting of postal and/or electronic votes. It could also make it possible for the Society, if so desired, to separate the AGM from a Reunion.

13 Proposal to publish *Witheridge Times* on the Members-Only section of the Witheridge FHS website

Proposed by: Kim Cook; Seconded by: Richard Witheridge

From the issue following the 2010 AGM, all issues of *Witheridge Times* be posted in pdf format on the members-only section of the web-site, each issue to be kept on-line for 12 months, and then removed;

members with no Internet access, or without Broadband access, to be given the option of downloading a copy in their local library or Internet café, or of receiving an unstitched copy in the post.

14 Proposal to thank those who run the Witheridge FHS website, and for the Witheridge FHS to take over payment of all website fees

Proposed by: Kim Cook; Seconded by: Maureen Witheridge

A vote of thanks be given to Paul Witheridge (Canada) for funding the web-site, and Paul Witheridge (Marlow), for funding the members-only section of the site, and for all their work in maintaining both areas of the site; also, should it be agreed that *Witheridge Times* be published on the web-site as outlined in the previous motion, and considering the savings thus achieved by the Society, the Witheridge FHS take on all fees and reasonable costs of maintaining the web-site and the members-only section.

15 Proposal to reinstate the Society's membership of the Federation of Family History Societies and to retain our membership of the Guild of One-Name Studies

Proposed by: Richard Witheridge; Seconded by: Alan Smith

The Society will re-instate our Membership of the Federation of Family History Societies, to ensure that we have the required insurance cover for AGMs, Reunions and all other meetings, and to avail ourselves of the Federation's promised help to publicise the Society, to assist our membership recruitment and, if necessary, find us a Secretary; also to retain our Membership of the Guild of One-Name Studies, to be held in the name of the Research Co-ordinator, who must agree to relinquish the Guild holding when the Society post is relinquished, and to ensure that full use is made of the publicity and other facilities the Guild offers.

16 Christmas Card Charity for 2010 to be the National Autistic Society

Proposed by Alan Smith; seconded by Roy Cook

17 Date and venue for 2011 Reunion

Proposal that the 2011 AGM and Reunion be held on either 4 & 5 June or 11 & 12 June, somewhere in the Wiltshire/Somerset/Dorset area, preferably close to the A303 (possibly somewhere like Street, Martock, Langport, or South Petherton).

Proposed by: Pamela Glynn; Seconded by: Jason Cook

18 Any other business

Family News



Ron in hospital, after his fall, looking remarkably cheerful!

Accidental damage

On 20 May 2009, while working on his garage roof, **Ron Dixon** went to climb down the ladder, missed his footing and fell to the paved driveway almost 9 feet below! Although his injuries were dreadful, miraculously he's escaped the most dangerous long-term ones.

Ron had a cracked head (but no brain damage), broke two neck vertebrae (but not close to spinal cortex), broke eleven ribs, some in two places, had a collapsed lung (not punctured), and a smashed right arm (which now has 2 pins and a coil). While in a London hospital he suffered an internal haemorrhage and it was discovered that his diaphragm had been split!

After nine days in hospital, two operations to set his arm, and one to repair the torn diaphragm, Ron was allowed home into **Brenda's** care. Unfortunately, the appropriate home nursing, pain management and support were not in place, so it was a tough time for both Brenda and Ron, as he was still in extreme pain and really in need of full nursing care.

After a further month confined to bed at home, Ron began to walk again, at first for only a few minutes at a time. Since then he's continued to make slow progress and is now able to drive, and to walk short distances.

Five months later, Ron and Brenda were able to get away for a short break with the family at Center Parcs, where Ron was able to practice bowling again.

Ron is still having physiotherapy to help him regain a normal gait, but is now feeling much brighter – the humour's back!

We know all members will wish Ron a full recovery and a safe year ahead!

Ron practices bowling again!



Pastures new 2009

After what seemed like an interminable wait, with the sale of their Folkestone, Kent, bungalow on and off for more than a year, in September Alan and Alison Smith finally managed to move closer to their daughter Catherine Shingler, with husband Geoff and their daughter Hannah.

Both Catherine and Hannah have considerable health problems, and with Geoff often having to travel on business, Alan and Alison are relieved to be on hand to help when needed.

Hannah's problems are wide-ranging and include allergies to man-made fibres and many food-stuffs. On the advice of the paediatrician, she's being home educated by Catherine, who is a qualified teacher. Although very bright, six-year-old Hannah has difficult days, and Catherine's ME means that teaching Hannah full time is a considerable strain. Following the move, Alison, also a qualified teacher, has been able to take over Hannah's teaching one day a week and give Catherine a much-needed break. Recent projects for Hannah have included learning about electrical circuits, and making a monster model out of boxes, using circuits to make the eyes light up!

Alan hasn't yet decided whether to retire and concentrate on their own house and garden, or whether to continue his consultancy work in horticulture. The new garden is larger than the one they had in Folkestone, and every inch of space is put to good use, so they've enjoyed plenty of produce, including raspberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, beetroot, potatoes, cauliflowers, parsnips and sprouts. They also have three chickens, which kept them in eggs until their

Every inch of space in the Smith's garden is put to good use!



Alan and Alison Smith's new home.

annual moult, which left them looking like escapees from a plucking factory!

Needless to say, there hasn't been much time for family history since the move, but Alison hopes to start again soon, looking for more details of the lives of her Bradworthy Witheridges and their descendants.

The new address for Alan and Alison is 6 Chancery Lane, Eye, Peterborough, Cambs PE6 7YF.

Sixtieth Celebrations!

In May 2009, when Stuart Witheridge, half-brother of our Chairman, Richard Witheridge, reached 60, Stuart's wife Sue organised a surprise party. Some 50 family and friends were gathered in Bishopsteignton, Devon, as Stuart arrived to a rousing chorus of 'Happy Birthday'. Among them were Stuart's daughters Zoe and Carly, brother Philip, with wife Eileen and son Michael, and of course Richard and Maureen.



Left: Richard with sister-in-law Eileen and brother Philip.



Right: Stuart cuts his 60th birthday cake.

Joyce Browne's recuperation

As some of our members are aware, in November 2009 Joyce Browne underwent major surgery for breast cancer.

Although the surgery was successful, in January and February this year Joyce also had radiotherapy. This involved a long round-trip to a specialist hospital every weekday for three weeks – a very tiring time.

Joyce is now recuperating gently but steadily, and wishes to thank all those who have sent cards and good wishes. They have all been greatly appreciated.

Although Joyce would very much like to attend the 2010 Reunion and AGM, she's not yet sure that she would be able to manage the journey from Luton to Tenterden. While all those attending the Reunion would love to see Joyce there, we wouldn't want her to overdo things and impair her ultimate recovery, so we shall fully understand if she isn't able to come. Meanwhile, we know all members will want to send Joyce their love and their continuing good wishes for her return to full health and strength.



Above: Birthday photo of Joyce at home in April.

Officers' Reports for 2008-9

The Chairman's Report

by Richard Witheridge

This past year has flown by so quickly it is hard to realise that we are almost ready for another reunion. Last year, unfortunately, Maureen and I were unable to get to the reunion due to a double booking. It clashed with a trip to Sorrento, which we could not miss as it had been booked for us.



This year we made sure our holiday was planned for the end of May, so that we could definitely attend the reunion. Guess what! It must be sod's law – or is it Murphy's? We thought we would have to miss the Reunion again this year, this time due to a secretly-planned family get-together to celebrate my younger brother, Stuart, reaching the age of 60. The invitation only arrived in February. Fortunately for us, the Reunion has been postponed to 4 July, so I am hoping to make both the Reunion and my brother's party!

Now to a different subject. Over the years we have struggled to get sufficient numbers of UK members to attend our Reunions, with sometimes less than ten members arriving which is very disheartening for the organisers. This happened to me for the 2000 reunion at Tiverton. In view of these problems, I wonder whether our yearly Reunions have run their course and we should consider restructuring the Society to avoid formal Reunions and AGMs, and perhaps cut back on some of the other administrative stuff. It is sad to have to come to this conclusion – in 21 years I have missed only one Reunion and enjoyed meeting other members and making many friends. However, I am sure the Society can continue to thrive in a modified form and keep members in contact with each other. We intend to publish our proposals for reforming the Society after further discussions at the AGM and will invite input from members before any final decision is reached.

The Secretary's Report

by Beryl Witheridge

This will be my last report as secretary.



This year, as every year, since I took on the secretaryship, I spent a lot of time trying to find a venue for our Reunion and Annual General Meeting. The most difficult part has always been in establishing how many members might attend the reunion. Of course, this depends strongly on where we intended to hold it and this year I made many phone calls and sent many e-mails asking people where they would be willing to travel and if they would be likely to attend.

I also pestered other Committee Members for reports and tried to set up Committee Meetings or conference calls to finalise plans.

Of course, nobody likes to commit themselves so far in advance, but, at the same time, I desperately needed the information to book the venue and make arrangements for our traditional reunion dinner. Eventually, I thought we were all sorted, but as you know, since then, we have had to rearrange both the date and the venue, leaving our plans somewhat in disarray and requiring yet more e-mails and more than a few letters. This is *not* a part of the Secretary's duties that I will really miss!

At the last AGM, to save money it was decided not to renew our membership of the FFHS (Federation of Family History Societies) and I was asked to look into other organisations that could provide us with the (inexpensive) insurance cover that we need. I have had no luck with this, especially the 'inexpensive' part. Fortunately, most of the time we are covered by the venue's own insurance. Further, due to a generous anonymous donation, we have been able to continue our FFHS membership this year – a big 'thank you' to that member.

On a final note, I would like to thank all members for their support during my years as secretary, and most of all for their friendship. That is something I will always cherish.

The Membership Secretary's Report

by Paul Witheridge (UK)

Over the past year our numbers have increased very slightly, from 51 to 53 full members. We lost three existing members, but gained six new ones.

Sadly, one of our most respected members, Rev David Witheridge of Minneapolis, USA, passed away. Another departure, which we were very sorry to see, was Dorothy Witheridge, a past representative for the Society in Australia. However, we are delighted to welcome the six new members – or more accurately five new members and one who has rejoined.

One concern is that membership subscriptions are very slow in coming in this year. This is not exactly a new phenomenon, but is more pronounced than in the previous year.



The Editor's Report

by Paul Witheridge (UK)

This has been a very bad year for *The Witheridge Times* and I regret to say that much of the problem is of my own making.

It started in the middle of last year, when it seemed that the supply of articles for the magazine had pretty much dried up. I decided that the only thing was to write some articles myself and embarked on two such.

Unfortunately, I bit off more than I could chew! The first article took about three weeks to complete while the second had still some way to go

after another four weeks of effort and I had proved (if I did not already know) that I was no genealogist!

I was much heartened by material that arrived from other contributors – my heartfelt thanks to you all.

However, by this time, other commitments intruded and I had to shelve the work until after Christmas, only to find then that other matters had to take precedence. Nevertheless, the much delayed issue of *The Witheridge Times* should be along by the time of the 4 July meeting, followed later in the year by three more issues.

The Webmaster's Report

by Paul Witheridge (Canada)

2008-9 has been a rather quiet year for announcements to the Society. Kathy and I were unable to attend the 2008 Reunion and AGM so were unable to take any pictures and none were submitted.

Paul (UK) submitted two interesting VE Day photos, in one of which he actually appears, for our *Memory Lane* page. No other 'happenings' or research resources were submitted for web publication in the interim since, until recent postings of the 2009 meeting information. No suggestions or criticisms were received either, and without a web counter (which I have little faith in, personally), I cannot gauge how much use the site actually gets. Accurate logging using host tools has a cost attached to it, I understand.

I have renewed the domain registration for another year as I still believe we require a 'web presence' even if only for future researchers. I was surprised to discover that a Google search of 'Witheridge' found us fallen to twentieth place. I shall work on that. Of course, adding 'family history' to the search string brings us up first and second.

I look forward to this year's discussion on the future of *The Witheridge Family History Society* and how it might impact our website.

The Research Co-ordinator's Report *by Kim Cook*

While I have been able to do some new research, much of my work this year has been in continuing to co-ordinate the various records I hold. However, I do need more information from members, notably on 20th- and 21st-century events, to help update our research records, particularly the Enhanced Narrative Pedigrees.

New Research

Prior to last year's AGM, I had spent a considerable amount of time in Kent Archives offices searching for information for my presentation on the *Witheridges of*



Chatham. Further information arrived after the AGM, and as a result I updated the presentation material for use in *The Witheridge Times*. Since then I have gleaned even more details of this family, and updated the records still further.

I've also done more research on the family of Sylvester Witheridge whose wife, Mary, was one of the accused at the infamous Salem Witchcraft trials. As stated in my research report for the 2006 AGM, I suspect this family came from Bedfordshire. In order to determine whether this is the case, I have tried to establish the background of Sylvester, Mary and their families, but the evidence continues to be conflicting. Again, an extensive article on *The Salem Identities* is ready for inclusion in *The Witheridge Times*.

Enhanced Narrative Pedigrees

Work has continued on compiling and updating the *Enhanced Narrative Pedigrees* (ENPs), bringing together data from a wide range of sources relating to specific branches of the family. Information from parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, civil registration of births, marriages and deaths, census returns, trade directories, wills and probate records, is combined to give a simple, coherent narrative of each family, branch by branch, and generation by generation.

Most of the work this year has involved updating existing ENPs, particularly the ones for the Kent-London-Birmingham branch and for the Bridgwater families featured in the *Green Dragon Lane* articles.

It would not be appropriate to have these ENPs on the website, but if any member would like to know more about his or her Witheridge ancestors, please e-mail me (Witheridge1987@aol.com).

National Burials Index (NBI) and National Marriage Index (NMI)

As reported last year, I extracted all the Witheridge entries then posted online from the *National Burials Index*, to which I subscribe. This year I have updated it with entries posted since then. Part of the *National Marriage Index* is now also available. To date there are less than a dozen Witheridge entries on NMI, but more should be added shortly. Some of the current marriage entries relate to the Bridgwater area, and have been useful in adding to the ENPs for the families there.

However, the family history societies for a number of counties have not contributed to these indexes, preferring to distribute the information they have collected through their county FHS publications. Devon is among the counties not included, so the indexes aren't quite as useful as they might otherwise have been, but there are a number of interesting strays (see below).

Copyright issues mean that we cannot publish straight lists of NBI and NMI entries in *The Witheridge Times*. However, once the information is

incorporated into an ENP, this becomes a new document for which I hold the copyright, and can therefore be published in *The Witheridge Times* should the Editor so wish.

Strays

I have also been collating ‘strays’ – records of Witheridge events which do not immediately fit into any of our known families. Some of these are details I have held for many years, while others are more recent acquisitions. Where possible, I am trying to make mini-ENPs. This makes it easier to spot any evidence which might link these strays into known branches of the family.

Parish Profiles

I have continued to add to my series of thumbnail sketches of parishes throughout England, Wales and Scotland. The information in these *Parish Profiles* varies from parish to parish, but is usually a combination of the following, with occasional extra details:

- location of the parish, its geography and terrain
- parish church dedication, style and history
- details of non-conformist churches and when founded
- information on local schools and charities
- population
- transport
- occupations

Any member wanting brief details of the parish in which ancestors lived should e-mail me at Witheridge1987@aol.com. I can’t guarantee that I’ll have the information you need already on file, but I’ll do my best to find it and add it to the collection.

Witheridges Remembered

Apart from my own additions, there have been no new entries for our *Witheridges Remembered* project.

For those members who are unaware of, or have forgotten about, this project, we are collecting pen portraits of earlier members of the various Witheridge families, whether from personal recollections, or stories handed down in the family. We’re aiming to provide information that official records can’t supply – details of personalities, foibles and temperaments, with anecdotes and character insights.

Please be assured that these memories will be made available only to members of the Witheridge FHS, and will not be put into the public domain without the consent of the contributors.

Please ensure that the Witheridges of your own family are recorded in this volume, so that others from your branch of the family may have some personal insight into the life and character of those you have known. As I said last year, don’t let the memories die!

The Treasurer's Report *by Beryl Witheridge*

This report will be short and sweet.

On the one hand, I am very pleased to report that, for the third year running, the Society's bank balance is pretty healthy.

On the other hand, our income for the past year is well down on the previous year, though this is offset by lower outgoings (mainly due to lower publishing costs). So, we must not let our apparent wealth go to our heads – according to the editor, printing cost for 2009-2010 will be a lot higher.

So, with that in mind, I have prepared a budget proposal for discussion at the AGM. It comes in at an alarming figure of £762. At this rate we shall eat through our healthy bank balance in a couple of years! Obviously something must be done and hopefully, given some of the other items in the agenda for the AGM, the coming year will see some changes that will help.



Witheridge Family History Society

Income and Expenditure for Year Ending 21 May 2009

Balance brought forward from April 2008 Statement No 249		£1,617.47
Income		
Membership Subscriptions	£380.24	
Donations	£ 0.00	
Sale of magazines	£ 3.00	
Sale of other items	£ 20.66	
Other incomings	£ 0.00	
Total income for year ending 21 May 2009		£ 403.90
Expenditure		
Printing & Distribution of Magazine Vol 22 No 1	£140.40	
Reunion costs	£205.00	
Subscription to Guild of One-Name Studies, 2008-9	£ 12.00	
Christmas cards & postage	£ 39.77	
Total expenditure for year ending 21 May 2009		£ 397.17
Final Balance as of May 2009 Statement No 259		£1,624.20

We, the undersigned, believe the above to be an accurate statement of the current financial standing for the Witheridge Family History Society.

B M Witheridge
Treasurer
Dated: 02.06.2009

P R Witheridge
Assistant Treasurer
Dated: 02.06.2009

S Kelly
Auditor
Dated: 03.06.2009

*Agenda for, and Minutes of, the
Witheridge Family History Society
Annual General Meeting, on 4 July 2009*

The meeting was held at 2.30 pm on 4 July 2009 at Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent, the home of Roy & Kim Cook.

Present: *Joyce Browne, Jason & Zoe Cook, Roy & Kim Cook, Alan & Alison Smith, Paul & Beryl Witheridge, Richard & Maureen Witheridge.*

1 Chairman's opening and welcome

Richard Witheridge welcomed everyone to our 23rd Meeting, and 22nd AGM, with special thanks to Roy and Kim Cook for making their new office available at such short notice, particularly as Roy had worked well into the night to get the new building ready. He also thanked them for the lunch and refreshments they had prepared.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Derek & Shirley Andrews, Ann & Jim Geddes Attwell, Sharon & Ted Brydges, Gina Couch, Julia Crocker, Brenda & Ron Dixon, Barbara & Terry Finemore, Pamela & Derek Glynn, Lorna Home, Nicola Humphreys, John & Pat James, Tom & Sheila Jewell, Dorothy Linter, Velma & Rodney Metcalfe, Catherine Spina, Robert & Audrey Tuck, Valerie Wells, Allan & Judith Witheridge, Amanda Witheridge, Jim Witheridge & David Torborg, Paul & Kathy Witheridge, Rod & Sue Witheridge, and Sue Witheridge. Apologies had also been received from Alan & Alison Smith, who had not anticipated being able to attend, but at the last minute found they were able to come. All apologies for absence were accompanied by good wishes, and many also included thanks to all those whose hard work keeps the Society running.

3 Minutes of the previous 2008 AGM, held at the Holiday Inn, Bybrook, Ashford, Kent

The minutes, having been circulated prior to the meeting, were taken as read and accepted unanimously.

4 Matters arising from these minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5 Matters arising from Officers' Reports

There were no matters arising from the Officers' Reports.

6 Election of Officers and Committee Members

The following were nominated for the posts listed, and agreed to stand.

<i>Chairman:</i>	Richard Witheridge Proposed by Joyce Browne, seconded by Pamela Glynn
<i>Vice-Chairman:</i>	Paul Witheridge (UK) Proposed by Roy Cook, seconded by Kim Cook
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Beryl Witheridge Proposed by Kim Cook, seconded by Roy Cook
<i>Assistant Treasurer:</i>	Paul Witheridge (UK) Proposed by Roy Cook, seconded by Kim Cook
<i>Membership Secretary:</i>	Beryl Witheridge Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Paul Witheridge (Canada)
<i>Research Co-ordinator:</i>	Kim Cook Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Allan Witheridge
<i>Editor:</i>	Paul Witheridge (UK) Proposed by Joyce Browne, seconded by Pamela Glynn
<i>Assistant Editor:</i>	Kim Cook Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Allan Witheridge
<i>Webmaster:</i>	Paul Witheridge (Canada) Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Allan Witheridge
<i>Committee Members:</i>	Roy Cook Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Allan Witheridge Pamela Glynn Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Allan Witheridge Maureen Witheridge Proposed by Richard Witheridge, seconded by Beryl Witheridge

There being no other nominations for these posts, the above were re-elected unanimously.

Note: As no nomination was received, either prior to, or during the meeting, for the post of Secretary, Beryl Witheridge agreed to continue for a short period until a new Secretary could be appointed. No new Secretary could be found, and Beryl felt unable to continue beyond the short initial period.

7 Overseas Representatives.

Proposed by Richard Witheridge, seconded by Paul Witheridge (UK)

The following agreed to continue as the Society's Overseas Representatives, and the Society was delighted to accept their offer.

Australia:	Judith and Allan Witheridge
New Zealand:	Velma Metcalfe
North America:	Kathy Witheridge

There being no other nominations, the above were re-appointed unanimously, and received a unanimous vote of thanks for their work, which is greatly appreciated.

8 Proposal for 2010 and 2011 AGM dates and venues

Proposed by Kim Cook, seconded by Roy Cook

We believe that many of the problems re poor attendance at reunions stem from late decisions by the Committee on date and venue, resulting in uncertainty among members and a lack of publicity. The mid-May date is also difficult, given that it sits between the UK's first two post-Easter bank holidays, when many people go away and/or visit family, making a third away-break in a month a bit much. To these issues we now have to add the economic climate, which for many people will rule out expensive hotels, meals etc.

To overcome these difficulties, we propose that:

- 1 The Reunion and AGM for both 2010 and 2011 be held at our home, Cherry Trees, Ingleden Park Road, Tenterden, Kent.
- 2 The dates be advanced a little, but still in line with the 13-month rule in the Constitution, to either Saturday 5 June or 12 June 2010, and Saturday 4 June or 11 June 2011.

Advantages

- a With dates and venues announced well in advance, members will have plenty of time to reserve dates, make plans, and avoid clashing events .
- b We would be able to organise advance publicity, including invitations to Witheridge descendants who are not Society members.
- c Our newly-built office (attached to the house), with Internet access and a wealth of family history resources and memorabilia to hand, makes an excellent AGM venue. It seats about 20 people comfortably at table, and also has an adjacent cloakroom.
- d We could have a buffet lunch here, either in the garden (if fine) or indoors.
- e It would be easier for families with children to attend, as the large garden, plus indoor play area, provide good facilities for children, and Zoe, a registered child-minder, would supervise.
- f There are a number of options for the evening meal. We could book a table at a local pub/restaurant. Depending on numbers, this booking would not need to be confirmed until, at most, a week before the event. Alternatively, we could provide a simple meal (eg shepherd's pie, bolognese, or similar which could be prepared in advance, with a light dessert of fruit and/or ice cream) here at Cherry Trees. A third option would be to organise a take-away meal to be eaten here.

- g There would be total flexibility about whether these events would cover 1, 2 or 3 days. For those who wish to stay overnight, there are plenty of options for B&B, hotels, inns, and even fishing lodges for those so inclined! There are also a number of good local sites for those with motor homes, camper vans or touring caravans. For those who might wish to spend longer in this area, there are also holiday cottages to rent. (We would be very happy to accommodate Joyce Browne here, as everything here is on one floor.) However, those who didn't want to stay longer than one day could head home either before or after the evening meal, depending on the length of their journey.
- h If people did stay overnight, there would also be flexibility about outings as, with car-sharing, there would be no need for advance booking, and people could decide on Saturday evening if and where they wanted to go out. Options for outings include Canterbury (Cathedral and other historic places), Rye (bird reserve, antiques market, castle, etc), Sissinghurst (castle and gardens), Biddenden (vineyard with cider plant), Great Dixter (famous gardens), and River Rother boat trip, as well as Tenterden Vineyard and the Kent & East Sussex Steam Railway (visited during the 2002 reunion). However, there would always be the option to spend the day here, either exploring the town or relaxing at Cherry Trees, if people would prefer that, with possibly a carvery lunch at a local pub.
- i Whether people come just for the day or stay longer, the costs are kept to a minimum – no coach hire, no expensive hotels (unless preferred), and minimal use of restaurants.

Disadvantage

- a The only disadvantage we can see is that the venue is not central for UK residents. However, there is good road access from the M25 and beyond, via the M20 and then A28. Access from the south coast is via the M27/A27 to Hastings, and then north via A28. Trains from London and Europe can be met at Ashford International, and London trains can also be met at Headcorn. For anyone flying in, the routes by road from Heathrow and Gatwick are via the M25, M20, A28 (as above), and from Stanstead via the M11, M25, M20 and A28, or by train to Headcorn or Ashford International (as above).

Issues of venue, travel organisation, abandoning a structured format for the Society, and separating the AGM from the Reunion, were discussed at considerable length. Both Richard Witheridge and Beryl Witheridge felt that the effort required to organise the event was too much for too few people. Paul Witheridge believed the Society should change the format of the AGM, and there was general agreement that the length of the AGM, to the detriment of social time, was putting some people off attending.

The opinions of those living in the south-west of England concerning travel were noted and understood, and Roy and Kim Cook affirmed that the proposal of meeting in Kent was made purely to give the WFHS a chance to steady itself and regroup. Should a suitable venue, easier for other members to reach, become apparent, the 2010 AGM could revisit the decision and opt for a venue further to the west in 2011. Jason Cook asked the Committee to consider possible mid-point venues within easier reach of members in the south-west, but still accessible for members from the east of the country.

Further issues were left for discussion under Item 10, and a vote was taken. Votes in favour were 6 present + 6 e-mail votes, votes against were 3 present + 1 e-mail vote, and abstentions were 1 present + 5 e-mail votes.

The overall vote being 12 in favour, 4 against and 5 abstentions, the motion was carried.

9 Proposal to hold a postal/online referendum on the future organisation of the Society

Proposed by Paul Witheridge (UK), seconded by Richard Witheridge

Recent experience has shown that the Society is operating in a very different environment to that which it first encountered when founded over 20 years ago. Electronic mail, voice and video calls are now common-place, via the Internet. The Internet has also become the prime source of genealogical information for the majority of those interested in their family's history.

The Witheridge Family History Society can still go above and beyond what the Internet can offer most people, thanks to the expertise and body of knowledge built up within the Society, but however true, this is not widely recognised in a world where TV adverts for commercial sites, such as Ancestry.co.uk, promise some sort of genealogical paradise. So, while family history research has become very popular, that popularity has not translated into a big rush of members to existing family history societies, ours included.

Furthermore, many of our existing members may feel they have gone as far as they reasonably can with research into their own families – it's the old 80/20 rule, where you get 80% of the results with just 20% of the effort, and it takes much more effort to go any further!

One outcome is that the social aspect of the Society – just being friends with each other – has become at least as important as the genealogical side. At the same time, many members are getting older (of course, strictly speaking, *all* members are getting older), and find long-distance travel less practicable, so that recent

efforts to boost the social side of Reunions have met with limited success.

So, the trends we observe are:

- The traditional Witheridge Reunion is attracting fewer attendees
- Annual General Meetings may not achieve a quorum.
- Committee meetings are difficult to organise.
- Material for the magazine is becoming scarcer.

It is obvious that the Society must change to meet these challenges, and many suggestions have already been put forward from the ‘activists’ within the Society. It’s now time for the membership at large to have its say and, to facilitate this, the following is proposed:

- 1 Within 28 days of this AGM, the Secretary shall write to all members giving details of proposals for change discussed at the AGM.
- 2 This will be followed by a period of 56 days of consultation during which members can express their opinions and suggestions.
- 3 To facilitate this consultation, the Secretary shall establish, as soon as possible, an on-line discussion forum operated by e-mail and open to all members with Internet access.
- 4 At the end of the 56-day consultation period, the Secretary shall again write to members giving a consolidated list of proposals for change, together with a postal ballot form for members to vote on each option. An alternative electronic form of voting, via the members-only area of the web-site, will also be made available.
- 5 Votes will be counted after a further 28 days, and the Secretary shall write to members informing them of these results.
- 6 In the likely event of changes to the Society’s Constitution being required, the Committee shall confer on these changes and draft a modified Constitution within a further 56 days. The Secretary shall then write to all members giving them details of the proposed Constitution and asking them to vote on its acceptance within a further 28 days.
- 7 Any changes to the Constitution required by these modifications, or by other membership-approved changes, shall then take place as soon as reasonably possible.

Paul Witheridge opened the discussion by making it clear that this was not a proposal to change the Society, but simply to put mechanisms in place to enable us to change the Society as and when needed. He felt that, without change, we were unlikely to achieve a quorum at any AGM and would then have to go through the process of arranging Extraordinary General Meetings, with all the hassle this involves, and even then end up without a quorum.

Membership levels were then discussed, particularly the detrimental effect of Internet family history sources on FHS memberships generally. However, **Alan and Alison Smith** confirmed that, from the experience of their local FHS, this effect had been temporary. Once people realised that they needed more than (the often unreliable) Internet information, they were pleased to be able to join a Society where help was available, and membership had risen again. **Kim Cook** confirmed that there was a vast amount of mis-information on the Internet, often posted by people who had no research experience, and had even encountered much mis-information on various branches of the Witheridge family.

There was further discussion on the ageing membership, with a call to recruit more of the younger generation. **Jason Cook** was commended for continuing his interest, when other former 'junior' members had faded away. Members voted unanimously in favour of the motion to assess options for change set forth in the proposal.

Note: Although the motion was passed at the AGM, as the Society has been without any Secretarial work since that day, it has been impossible to implement the timetable set out in the proposal. However, moves are in hand to set up the Internet forum, through which members will be able to discuss these and other proposals.

10 Future organisation of the Society

Proposed by Beryl Witheridge, seconded by Paul Witheridge(UK)

The AGM shall discuss the future organisation of the Witheridge Family History Society and produce a list of option for change which may then be used as a starting point for subsequent and more extensive debate by the membership (see item 9.1 above).

Alison Smith felt that the scarcity of new members was temporary and would improve when Internet researchers realised their need of us, and also when those in the 35-50 age group began to take an interest and to have the time to be more involved.

Paul Witheridge again pointed out the need to change the Constitution and reduce the quorum. He also stressed the need to produce an electronic version of Witheridge Times, to keep us afloat financially, and confirmed that only eight existing members were without Internet access. However, he stated that there was sufficient material for only 2-4 issues of Witheridge Times, and that beyond that, the outlook was bleak.

Factors in having a less structured Society, perhaps without subscriptions, with members doing work voluntarily without recompense of costs, were discussed. Jason Cook asked whether income could be generated from links on the WFHS website, but Paul

Witheridge felt there were insufficient hits on the site to attract such links. *Joyce Browne* reminded members of earlier AGMs when crafts and other items were sold to raise funds.

However, **Alan Smith, Alison Smith, Jason Cook, and Kim Cook** all agreed that some kind of subscription would be necessary, and that some structure would be needed to determine responsibilities, eg to decide who would take over should a volunteer have to stand down. They all felt there was also a need to have one person responsible for filtering sensitive information that might, if passed on thoughtlessly, cause family rifts. **Paul Witheridge** accepted that a looser structure would weaken such filters, and suggested that, in future, all family material in the hands of any member, intended to be passed on either for publication or to be given to another member, should be routed via the Research Co-ordinator, who would filter sensitive details before passing them for publication or forwarding them on to the person concerned.

Again, the need to reduce the AGM element of the Reunion and increase the social element was recognised. **Jason Cook** suggested that a looser structure might involve a group of regional co-ordinators, acting in lieu of a formal committee, who could arrange local meetings, pass on newsletters, and feed back information for publication. These could be linked by Internet communication using a supervisor and/or moderator. However, he accepted that some funding (requiring a Treasurer) would still be needed for Internet services and management.

Kim Cook identified three key areas for consideration – structure (Committee, regional teams, or looser), subscriptions (same, less or a completely different method of financing) and communication (co-ordinating and sharing information, magazine or newsletter format, and social contact).

Paul Witheridge again affirmed our need to become an Internet-based organisation, using the web-site to advertise our presence and to publish our material. We should also look at setting up a discussion forum for members. This would need to be moderated, and the membership controlled, but we would need volunteers to do this. **Kim Cook** was willing to moderate the information, but lacked the expertise to manage the technical side. No vote was required, but a list of options to put to the membership was needed. Based on this discussion, and suggestions made during discussion of Item 9, the following list of options to be discussed by the membership was compiled.

**Regional structure – with no formal Committee and no magazine
Internet forum for community discussion**

**Registration of membership and monitoring of e-mail forum
AGM – reduction in physical quorum, or a quorum based on electronic
and postal voting numbers.**

Options to widen membership

**Publishing Witheridge Times on the WFHS web-site, with paper
copies being mailed only to those who do not have a Broadband
connection, or those who specifically request a paper copy.**

**Subscriptions to continue, to be reduced, or to be replaced by other
fund-raising methods.**

11 Christmas card charity for 2009 to be Diabetes UK

Proposed by Beryl Witheridge, seconded by Paul Witheridge (UK)

This was agreed unanimously.

12 2009-10 expenditure

Proposed by Beryl Witheridge, seconded by Paul Witheridge (UK)

The limits for 2009-10 expenditure shall be set as follows, and each individual line item shall be voted on separately.

Printing costs (approx cost for 4 magazines)	£600.00
Guild of One-Name Studies subscription (due October 2009)	£ 12.00
Charity Christmas cards and postage (due November/December 2009)	£ 50.00
Research budget	£ 50.00
Contingency budget	£ 50.00
Total	£762.00

*Beryl Witheridge confirmed that the printing costs include postage
and envelopes. Each section of the proposal was passed unanimously.*

13 Date and venue for 2010 Reunion

See item 8 above

*This was confirmed as 12-13 June 2010, in Tenterden, with AGM on
12 June, subject to any interim decision to amend the Society's
structure.*

14 Any other business

Somerset gathering

*Paul and Beryl Witheridge announced that they would be meeting
Pamela and Derek Glynn for lunch at the Farmer's Arms, Combe
Floreay, Somerset, on Wednesday 29 July. Other members of the
Society would be welcome to join them.*

Memorial Service for Rev David Witheridge

*Beryl Witheridge asked that the Society send a tribute to be read at
David Witheridge's memorial service, to be held at Grace Trinity*

Church, Minneapolis on 15 August 2009, which would have been David's 95th birthday. All present agreed that this should be written by Kim Cook, who had known him better than most other members had. Kim agreed that she would combine this with a tribute from the Cook family.

Extension of subscriptions

Kim Cook proposed that, as members had not had value for money as far as subscriptions were concerned, with no magazines for over a year, subscriptions should be extended by one year. **Paul Witheridge** (Marlow) regretted that he had been unable to produce an issue prior to the AGM but planned to get it out very shortly, followed by three further issues during the year. It was therefore decided to await further issues of Witheridge Times. Should the four promised issues be published, the subscriptions will stand, but should they not be published, the Committee will ratify the proposal to extend subscriptions .

Note: As none of the four promised issues was published, the Committee has since ratified the proposal to extend all subscriptions by one year. In December 2009, the Chairman and some other Committee members, recognising the need to produce a magazine quickly, asked the Assistant Editor, Kim Cook, to undertake this to ensure that members were catered for, and were aware of the outcomes of the 2008 and 2009 AGMs.

There being no further business, the meeting was concluded.

Tenterden – A Very Brief Report!

Following a hasty change of date and venue, the AGM and Reunion was compressed into one short day in Tenterden in July. With an extra-long AGM, the main opportunities for social catching-up came, inevitably, with food and drink! However, members did get a chance to enjoy Roy & Kim's

garden when posing for the traditional group photo (left).



L to R, back row: Paul Witheridge, Jason Cook, Roy Cook, Alan Smith, Alison Smith, Beryl Witheridge, Zoe Cook & Lauren Cook; front row: Ethan Cook, Kim Cook, Maureen Witheridge, Joyce Browne and Richard Witheridge.

Hats with History

by *Kim Cook*

On a sunny day in May 1992, **Roy** and I joined a dozen others for the Witheridge reunion in Alderton, Glos. For our son **Jason**, it was an opportunity to introduce his future bride **Zoe** to her first gathering of the Witheridge clans. Throughout the day, Zoe did a superb job as mistress of the teapot, which was much appreciated.

The events of the day included three competitions. The two sections in the photographic competition were won by **Sue Witheridge** (daughter of **Richard**) and **June Witheridge**. June also won the poetry competition with an evocative poem on Ermington in August. But the most unusual competition was the Historic Hat competition.

There were four very different entries. **Joyce Browne** brought a Victorian poke bonnet, **Graham Browne** brought an imposing helmet of the Imperial Norfolk Yeomanry, complete with spike, plume and brass chin strap, **John Witheridge** produced a World War II gas mask, and I brought along a silk opera hat which had belonged to my great-grandfather **Edmund Witheridge**.

We were each asked to relate the story of the hat, and its place in our history. Joyce won first prize with her pretty bonnet and her tale of her great-great-aunt **Elizabeth Cassell Witheridge**. Elizabeth, clearly a determined and quirky character, had issued instructions that, whenever and wherever she died, no-one was to touch her body. No washing or embalming was allowed, no change of clothes – she was to be buried exactly as she had died.

One day in 1859, Elizabeth prepared to go out, put on for the first time the new bonnet she had just bought, and then dropped dead in



Joyce Browne (centre) wears the poke bonnet she made to illustrate her tale of Elizabeth Cassell Witheridge. Kim Cook (left), with Edmund Witheridge's silk hat, and Graham Browne (right), with his Norfolk Yeomanry helmet, listen to Joyce's tale.

the hallway of her house! The family members who found her were happy to allow her to be buried, as she wished, in the clothes she was wearing at the time, but didn't see why a brand new bonnet should be thrown into the grave. Carefully, without touching the body, they undid the ribbons, eased the bonnet off her head, and concealed it as they left! On the basis of waste not, want not, the hat was later put to good use.

The story was true, but the beautiful bonnet displayed on Witheridge Day was new. Joyce had made it herself, in shades of lilac and purple, decorated with sprigs of violets and pretty ribbons – a very convincing replica of a bonnet that would have been all the fashion in 1859. It was truly a work of art, which she brought in a specially-made lilac draw-string bag.

In my case the opera hat was original and almost 100 years old. The spring mechanism which allowed the hat to be flattened when removed still worked (and still does), but in places the silk is so badly worn as to be almost threadbare. Beside Joyce's pretty bonnet and Graham's sparkling helmet, it looked very drab.

Although these collapsible hats were known as opera hats, Edmund's outings were not to the opera, but to special family and social events and local temperance meetings. Edmund had signed the pledge as a youngster in Plymouth, but his future bride, Prudence White Barry, had clearly done no such thing.

We don't know what Prudence was like in the early days of her marriage, but she and Edmund appear to have been happy enough to start with. Edmund, who had started out as an orphan apprentice with the West of England Paper Staining Company in Plymouth, progressed extremely well and eventually became a manager, bringing a level of prosperity they both enjoyed.

In 1883 Edmund was head-hunted by a wallpaper company based in Chelsea, and so they came to London. It may have been the move that precipitated the change in Prudence, or it may have been the birth, in 1887, of her daughter Olive, when her sons were 17 and 15.

Edmund Witheridge in his shiny silk opera hat, with daughter Olive and wife Prudence, circa 1894, possibly at a family wedding



Whatever the cause, Prudence turned to drink, until it reached the point where she was clearly an alcoholic, and far from prudent.

Edmund would order the servants to scour their large house looking for the gin bottles, which he would then empty down the nearest sink. Prudence became crafty, and had her petticoats made with special pockets in which to hide the gin bottles, knowing that Edmund would never subject her to the ignominy of a body search.

Clearly, it was impossible for Prudence to accompany her husband to his temperance meetings, but he loved to take his grandchildren. Most of them had lovely singing voices, and my aunt **Eva Witheridge** was a good pianist, so the Witheridge grandchildren frequently took to the platform to sing the old Victorian temperance songs.

Eva's speciality was one about a man who spent all evening drinking in the local tavern, while his wife was nursing a sick baby at home. As the clock struck the hour, an older girl was sent with a message asking her father to come home, as the baby was ill. Father said he would come, but stayed drinking. The clock struck another hour, the girl went again, and again father failed to appear. With each verse another hour struck and the condition of the baby became worse until, at the dreaded hour of midnight, the baby died, while father still sat in the tavern drinking. Eva could milk this song for all it was worth, until there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

But one day her performance was ruined. Her grandmother Prudence, being more than three sheets to the wind, had been locked in her bedroom while the family went to the meeting. What no-one had taken into consideration was that there was a new young lad, working in the garden and the stables, who had joined the staff only that week. Prudence spotted him in the garden, opened the window, spun him a yarn about accidentally being locked in, and asked him to come into the house, find the key and let her out. The lad, knowing nothing of her propensity to drink, and wishing to obey the wife of his new employer, did as he was told. He was then asked to harness up one of the little dog-carts, take the reins, and drive her to Kingston. She arrived, decidedly deshabillée, having fished a bottle of gin from her petticoats, and staggered into the Temperance Hall waving the gin bottle and yelling 'Down with the demon drink'!

In truth it was a desperately sad situation, but the children didn't see it like that. In the uproar Eva, her sister **Olive** (named after her aunt), and their brother **Bill** (**Brenda Dixon's** father), dissolved into giggles as Edmund and his friends desperately rushed to silence



Sue wearing great-grandpa's hat

Prudence and escort her out of the building. It was left to the children to retrieve the hat and follow them home.

This happened when Eva was probably about ten or eleven, which puts it at about 1906. A century later, when my cousin **Sue Witheridge** (from New Zealand), was visiting us, I brought out some of the family heirlooms, including the clock presented to Edmund when he left Plymouth in 1883, and the old silk hat, and took photos of Sue with the clock, and wearing the hat.

In 2008, Roy and I were visiting **Joyce Browne**, while she was sorting out things ready for her move to a smaller flat. Among a vast pile of items needing a new home was a pretty lilac draw-string bag, and inside was still the beautiful lilac bonnet she had made for the hat competition sixteen years earlier. She asked if I knew anyone who could make use of it, otherwise it would end up in the skip.

I hated the thought of such a beautifully-made hat being chucked in a skip, and as I racked my brains, I realised I had the answer. Our little grand-daughter **Lauren** loves dressing up, and purple is one of her favourite colours. Although big for a four-year-old, she was still a little small for the hat, but I thought she would probably grow into it and enjoy having it in her dressing-up box.

Easter is traditionally a time for bonnets, so when **Jason, Zoe** and the children visited us for Easter that year, it was the ideal time to give Lauren her bonnet. Amazingly, it fitted quite well, and she loves it. Again, the camera came out, and we sent Joyce a copy of the photo, to show that her handiwork had indeed found a very happy new home.

So it is that we have this little group of photos of hats. They are indeed hats with history, and I can't help wondering where they will turn up next, and what new stories will attach to them in the coming years.

Lauren shows off her new Easter bonnet, made by Joyce Browne 16 years earlier for the Witheridge Historic Hats competition!



continued from inside front cover

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Subscriptions

Please remember that annual membership renewal subscriptions are due in January. The subscription rates are:

UK membership	£10.00	Overseas membership	£12.00
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Please note that all subscriptions must be in **UK pounds sterling**. Each subscription covers everyone at the same address, sharing the same copy of *Witheridge Times*.

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