



W^oitheridge

Family History Society

Spring, Summer, Autumn 2020

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Family News

The past year has thrown more challenges at us than we could ever have imagined – Covid-19 with its wide ranging health, economic, educational, social, and welfare repercussions, natural disasters including wild-fires and floods, and growing political tensions. Many of us have discovered more resilience, strength, and patience than we thought we had, and found unexpected blessings along the way. Our family news shows how our members have been coping.

Rob & Cathy Staples

Rob has written from NSW, Australia.

We've been so very fortunate with regard to Covid – a combination of being on a relatively remote island, a wonderful health system, and state and national governments that have generally handled the situation with great skill – plus most people have been sensible. We now have virtually no new cases nationally and state borders are now starting to open up. Some very strict lockdowns (particularly in Victoria) have caused unrest, but overall, it's good at present.

Cathy has been working away from home a lot – she takes on short term (2-3 months at a time) contracts as a health service manager looking after hospitals in the Central West of NSW. She's currently managing a small rural hospital at Coolah. My work as a civil engineer and project manager is mostly done from home anyway.

We've had the most glorious spring rain that has filled our streams and dams and transformed the countryside to a beautiful carpet of green. It does look and feel so good now – what a difference a year makes! The devastation of the bush fires last year is still clearly evident and will be for many decades, but at least the welcome rain has given the countryside a boost on the way to regeneration.

I recently had a short stint in hospital for a repair to previous surgery, so I'm on light duties for a while. This means the grass and weeds on our 60-acre property are growing rampantly until I'm allowed to use the mower! It also means that I'm not allowed to fish for the next few weeks. Although I remain on the National Board of Fly Fish Australia, I'm stepping down this year as National President, which will give me more time to enjoy my own fishing.

Our elder son David is an instructor at the Queensland Corrective Services Training Academy. Daughter Gillian has just finished her nursing degree, while her husband Shane divides his time between working as a cabinet maker and working on his family farms at Temora, NSW. They have two daughters, Ella (6), and Hallie (3½). Younger son George is a licensed plumber, based in Sydney. All are well, and getting on with life.

So encouraging to hear that things are good, and particularly that the land is starting to recover after the disastrous wildfires. As Rob says, 'what a difference a year makes', so let's hope the coming year sees other improvements for us all, particularly in the Covid situation.

Family News

Smith/Shingler family

Catherine Shingler has written from Eye, Cambridgeshire.

My mum, Alison Smith, had a frustrating summer due to a flare-up of lupus which made life very difficult. Like many who've had to stay at home in recent months, she's found pleasure in the natural world. The garden birds have provided entertainment as the robins and blackbirds create a fuss until food has been put out. At least one hedgehog visits the garden each night and enjoys the food in its own special house.

My brother, Philip, has been furloughed since April and has been undertaking a range of training courses. He continues to volunteer for the Archives and Records Association as a training officer. His furlough has now been extended until March.

Geoff (our Membership Secretary) has been fortunate to be able to work throughout lockdown, mostly from home. Most of his customers are in the food industry (milling mainly). Working from home has enabled us to have more family meals together, which is much appreciated.

Hannah's Arts Award Class, sponsored by the Arts Council in conjunction with Trinity College, London, was able to continue through lockdown by going online. She has now passed her Silver Arts Award and received a certificate and a badge. To achieve this, Hannah had to complete at least 60 hours of guided learning, plus 35 hours of independent learning, and collect her own individual arts portfolio giving evidence of a wide range of arts practice and pathways, and leadership development. She also now has her own website:

<https://dragonsflyatsunset.blogspot.com/>



As a result of the Covid-19 restrictions, the workshops/classes she would ordinarily have been doing this term and beyond are not available, but she hasn't been twiddling her thumbs. Instead, she's been putting her artistic skills to good use by doing some volunteering from home for both the Youth Pastor and the Children's Worker at our local church. She's also hoping to do some volunteering, from home, for local charity Little Miracles.

For myself, I'm trying to balance and meet everyone's needs whilst also trying to do something relaxing from time to time in order to safeguard my own health as much as possible.

We send our best wishes to them all, as well as congratulations to Hannah for achieving her award. Members will be able to see an example of Hannah's work when they receive their WFHS Christmas card, which Hannah has designed for us.

Family News

Roy & Kim Cook

Kim has written from Biggin Hill, Kent.

During the summer we were allowed to meet in the garden, and it was wonderful to see friends and family on my birthday but, sadly, the second lockdown makes this impossible. We're allowed to be in a 'bubble' with Jason as he helps us with shopping for fresh foods that don't keep between deliveries of online orders. As a joint birthday present for Roy and me, our younger son Adam sent us a Portal, which enables us to have video chats with family and friends via Facebook. This is so much better than ordinary phone calls, and we've kept in touch across the UK, and also in the Isle of Man, USA, and Majorca. Sadly, hugs are still impossible.

Roy continues with his gardening work, although he's had to shorten his client list. He now goes only to gardens with side or back gates, so that he never goes into another house. While he's working, he uses only his own equipment, customers stay indoors, and payments are made by immediate bank transfer. It all works very well. The customers get their gardens done, Roy finds the work very therapeutic, and there's no contact, so no risk.

In our own garden, with its flight of brick steps up from the patio doors, an area of loose granite chippings, and more steps down to the side gate and garage, I've been finding access more difficult, so we called in a contractor to resolve this. An area of garden immediately outside the house was dug out to give level access, and tons of soil were removed. We now have a sunny patio outside our patio doors! The flower borders, retained by sleepers, remain at their original height, effectively making them raised beds, so that gardening is much easier.



Since I was 'grounded' by doctors in February, my only excursions have been for medical appointments, mostly at Guy's Hospital in London. The journey is at least 1½-2½ hours each way – very tiring, but worth it, because Guy's is excellent! I've had radiotherapy for a spinal tumour at C3, which has brought noticeable improvement. This was followed by a trial of 3 cycles of immunotherapy for the soft tissue tumours. It was such a relief to hear that it was proving effective and hadn't produced any significant side effects, so I'm now on an ongoing course, for as long as it works and doesn't cause side effects. This is great, but inevitably limits my work time, and I'm struggling to keep up with work commissions and the completion of my book.

However, our new place in the sun, with a view of the raised garden beds, is a lovely retreat when I need to take a break from work.

Family News

Liz & Chris Davey

Liz has written from Hertford, Hertfordshire.

2020 was going to be a wonderful year for us with plenty of time spent with old friends and family, and lots of travel. As we all know, it's been an exceptional year for very different reasons.

We should have been attending my nephew's wedding in Cornwall in early May. This, along with thousands of others, had to be cancelled. Philip and Emma managed to have a small event in mid-September but, with so few guests allowed, we didn't make the final guest cut; a shame as I'd already bought my outfit!

At the end of July my American cousin John, and his wife Lois, should have arrived in the UK. The plan was to take them on a month-long road trip of England, Wales, Ireland and finally Scotland, culminating in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. We'd spent some time booking hotels, ferries and events, and then had to spend even more time trying to get our money back!

Instead of these wonderful experiences, we had to find things to do closer to home. We discovered some amazing walks, setting off from the house and exploring locally. Chris, who had been furloughed, had time to make his old motorbike roadworthy.

For my birthday in August, we had a day out at Highclere Castle (below left), where Downton Abbey was filmed, with a champagne afternoon picnic – lovely once we escaped the swarms of wasps!

Our Ruby Wedding Anniversary (40 long years !!!) fell at the end of September. We'd planned a European City Break, maybe Barcelona or Budapest. Fortunately, we hadn't actually booked anything when lockdown was put in place, so we celebrated at Burghley House (below right) near Stamford in Lincolnshire with dinner at a restaurant in Cambridge on the way home.

We did manage to visit my family in Somerset in early August. We hadn't seen them for six months and it was an exceptionally nice visit with perfect weather.

At least we were blessed with lovely weather over most of the Spring and Summer that helped make the difficult situation more bearable. Let's hope we can enjoy a fairly normal Christmas.

We're all well here, and thankful for being able to get out and about when possible. Now, Chris and his company are busy delivering minus 80-degree freezers for the vaccine that is hopefully coming soon!



Congratulations to Liz and Chris on their Ruby Wedding Anniversary, and for finding somewhere special to celebrate. Well done, Chris, on the freezer delivery contract – our UK members will be very grateful for your company's expert specialist skills when the vaccine is rolled out.

Family News

Jason Cook

Jason has written from Croydon about a long weekend in Devon.

This has been a difficult year for so many people - Covid -19, lockdown, and being furloughed have created many problems. My problem has been exactly the opposite - I have worked all the way through. A 5.30am alarm is even worse when you know that no one else has to get up!

I felt I had earned myself a little relaxation, so at the end of August I booked some train tickets to Devon, for the beginning of October. A bargain at £44! The purpose of my trip was to visit a friend I hadn't seen for a long time. I'm glad I booked the tickets so far in advance - the week before I travelled the same trip would have cost £104!

Hazel and I have been friends for over 30 years - nearly as long as I have known my wife, Zoe! Hazel is godmother to both Ethan and Lauren, but I don't get to see her often enough, especially since she moved to Paignton about 7 years ago, with her parents, to take over a small caravan site. We have had a few holidays there, but the last time I saw her was 3 years ago.

The train journey there took about 5 hours from start to finish, which is about the same time as the car journey would have taken - but far less stressful! To the best of my memory, that is actually the longest train journey I've ever been on (although it was 3 different trains).

Weather permitting, the plan was to go on a long coastal walk one day, and go out on Hazel's boat the next day. Yes, you read that right, she does own a boat. It's only a small one (21ft, if memory serves), and it is called "Second Wind". Fortunately the weather was kind, and we had a 6 mile stroll along the Devonshire coast (well, there was one minor downpour, but we didn't get too wet). It even stayed dry for the boat trip, but unfortunately it was too windy to use sail power, so we used the outboard motor, going about a mile out to sea from Torquay before coming back. Hazel even trusted me with the tiller! I must be honest and say, at the start, I was well outside my comfort zone, but I relaxed after a while, and it was very enjoyable.



Family News



Unfortunately, time flies when you are having fun, and all too soon it was time to head back to London. My long weekend away was relaxing, and a change from the norm, and even a little snag on the journey home didn't ruffle my feathers in the slightest - that came the next day when I went back to work, and it felt like I had never been away!

I've included a few pictures, but I ought to give the butterfly a special mention. It's a Speckled Wood, and I caught it fluttering round my caravan. When I took it outside to set it free, it decided it liked being on the end of my finger, and sat there for about 5 minutes - more than enough time to get my phone out of my pocket and take a number of pictures. I even managed to zoom in on it (no mean feat one handed!) to get the picture I have included.

All in all, a good time away, and I am hoping to visit Hazel again next spring.



News for Researchers

Please note: Following the latest Covid-19 restrictions, most record and archive offices are closed, and opening times will not be determined until the current lockdown ends. However, in some cases, staff working on internal projects (eg cataloguing, digitising) may be able to deal with telephone and/or email enquiries.

Devonshire Records Updates

As most of our members are aware, Devonshire has long had three centres for archives. In 2014, management of the Devon County Record Office at Exeter was taken over by Devon Heritage Services, and its name was changed to **Devon Archives and Local Studies (DALs)**.

It is located at:

Devon Heritage Centre,
Great Moor House,
Bittern Road,
Sowton,
Exeter,
Devon, EX2 7NL.

Telephone 01392 888700

Email devonarchives@swheritage.org.uk.

Records held there include books, manuscripts, maps, newspapers, photographs, and many other resources, which are detailed in their online catalogue. As DALs no longer accepts CARN (County Archive Network) cards, you will need to register for a South West Heritage Trust reader's ticket, which is valid for four years. These tickets are also valid at **DALs North Devon** office, which is housed within Barnstaple Library (pictured) at:

Tuly Street,
Barnstaple,
Devon, EX31 1EL.

Telephone 01271 31879

Email northdevon@swheritage.org.uk

and also at Somerset Archives and Local Studies at:

Brunel Way,
Norton Fitzwarren,
Taunton, TA2 6SF.

Email somersetarchives@swheritage.org.uk

South west Devon is covered by a different organisation, formerly known as the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, which was housed in Clare Place, Plymouth. This location had long given cause for concern, as neighbouring industrial premises, including a tyre centre, were deemed hazardous, and at one point there was talk of forced closure of the archive facility.

After years of consultation over various alternative sites, it was decided to include a new archives facility in a multi-million-pound cultural centre. This new centre, known as The Box, is located in Tavistock Place, Plymouth, and incorporates the original City Museum and Art Gallery, the former City Library and St Luke's Church, topped with a modern superstructure 'archive in the sky', housing research and learning facilities, along with performance and exhibition spaces, a café, shop, and bar! This superstructure, which is basically a box, has been described as 'avant garde' design, but one national newspaper described it as being 'like a storage shed blown in by a gale!' Whatever you think of the architecture, the archives for south and west Devon now have a home in a safe, temperature-controlled environment.



News for Researchers

Archives at The Box, Plymouth



As well as housing Church of England and Nonconformist church records, the archive collection includes hospital, prison, workhouse, and education records, coroners' and cemetery records, together with records of charities, societies, and local organisations. Included with the many local government records are details of World War 2, its impact on the city, and post war reconstruction. Merchant shipping registers and business records can also be found at The Box, along with trade directories, estate and family collections, personal archives including diaries and correspondence, building plans and maps, and many other resources.

Local studies resources are divided between The Box and the Library. The selection at the box contains books on all aspects of local history and folklore, with histories of individual towns, parishes, and people, as well as local geography, natural history, and archaeology, and 'how to' books on genealogy and family history.

The Library's special collections include local studies ephemera, photograph and print collections, together with Sabine Baring-Gould's collection 'Songs of the West', manuscripts of Devon folk songs.

There is an online archive catalogue which includes digital photographs of parts of the collections. This is not yet complete, but is an ongoing project, with more digitised images being added regularly.

The Box is at Tavistock Place, Plymouth, Devon PL4 8AX. Telephone 01752 304774. Currently there is no published email address.

Cornwall Records and Archives



A year ago, Cornwall opened its own new history centre, known as Kresen Kernow (Cornwall Centre). This new archive centre has been constructed within the shell of the former Redruth Brewery at:

Little Vauxhall,

Redruth,

Cornwall TR15 1AS.

Telephone 01209 614430.

Email kresenkernow@cornwall.gov.uk.

It houses the world's largest collection of documents, books, maps and photographs relating to Cornwall's history, and has 14 miles of shelving housing over 1.5 million archive items. Kresen Kernow's café and exhibition areas will be reopened as soon as possible. One planned exhibition will focus on migration to and from Cornwall. Meanwhile, the Manorial Documents Register Project for Cornwall, funded by The National Archives, began in January and work has continued on the project throughout lockdown. Using original material and secondary sources, staff have entered 425 of the over 1100 manors in Cornwall on the draft online register, which is due to go live in 2022. Work is under way creating manor histories for all potential manors in Cornwall.

News for Researchers

Parish Chest

The Family History Federation formally launched Parish Chest at its AGM on 31 May 2020. Several commercial websites already offer basic information required for creating a family tree, but there comes a time when the researcher requires more local detailed information about a particular area, parish or topic which will add to their family story, 'put meat on the bones', and complete the picture!

Parish Chest makes this much easier, as it has brought together many data sets and much information, compiled and marketed by individual family history societies, with other genealogical goods and services. It's all in one place for ease of access, shopping and purchase!

The content of Parish Chest already has a good base upon which to increase quantity, quality and type of information on offer and includes the following:

- Parish Registers Transcriptions of births, baptisms, marriages, deaths and much more from local FHSs
- Memorial Inscriptions Information from gravestones across the country, compiled by local FHSs
- Nonconformists records of Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, Quakers, together with other nonconformist lists
- Wills and Probate Indexes of wills and administrations
- Military and Naval Militia lists and more
- Directories Information from trade directories over the years
- Poor Law Records Information on poor law and workhouses
- Maps essential for researchers; find one for your area
- Census returns, including many early censuses, few of which ever survived
- Leaflets and Booklets Selection of 'How to' leaflets and other useful booklets on many topics
- Miscellaneous Coroners' notes, apprenticeships, ships, mining accidents, and much more

Members of family history groups can have a 'shop' on the site, and groups which belong to the Family History Federation can collect subscriptions through Parish Chest free of commission charges, too.

Go to www.parishchest.com for more information

2020 VAGM Summary Minutes

Our first VAGM, which was a great success, commenced on Saturday 20 June 2020, closed on Saturday 27 June 2020, and formally completed voting on Monday 6 July 2020. A full transcript of the VAGM discussion, redacted of any personal details where appropriate, and a summary of voting results was shared with all members on Monday 10 August 2020, extra time having been allowed for responses from non-email members. Below is a summary of the outcomes of the VAGM for ease of reference.

- 1. Chairman's opening and welcome** - Successfully completed.
- 2. Apologies for absence** - No apologies were received from those who consented to take part.
- 3. Minutes of the 2019 AGM** - Proposal confirmed by Chris & Liz Davey, seconded by Philip Milnes-Smith.
- 4. Matters arising from these Minutes** - Confirmed all included in Agenda or fully resolved previously.
- 5. Matters arising from Officers' Reports**

Key matters identified were the need to attract new members in order for the society to continue, a lack of membership participation in or sharing of research in recent years, and expenditure continuing to exceed income. The consensus was to resolve this by moving to a "per person" subscription model, but the Chairman felt the topic warranted a separate committee meeting at some point in the near future. It was also suggested gift memberships and more proactive use of Facebook could increase membership, income and participation.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members

All nominations were unanimously upheld, with each nominee abstaining from voting on their own position but no votes against any nomination, from 15 voting members.

Chairman	Jason Cook
Vice Chairman	Chris Davey
Membership Secretary	Geoff Shingler
Treasurer	Liz Davey
Assistant Treasurer	Chris Davey
Research Co-ordinator	Kim Cook
Facebook Moderators	Maxine Neale
	Bill Dwyne
	vacant
Webmaster	Bill Dwyne
Secretary	Amy Kennedy
Newsletter Editor	vacant, currently secretary
Committee Members	Roy Cook
	Philip Milnes-Smith
	vacant

We have not received any further nominations or volunteers for the vacant positions. Anyone interested in taking up any of the vacant positions as Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Facebook Moderator, or Committee Member, has been invited to contact the Chairman at any time. It has also been flagged that, due to the recent deterioration in Kim's health, and as Amy cannot act as sole arbiter of what news about our family should be included in our newsletters, it will be necessary for someone to agree to collaborate with Amy as Newsletter Editor, if none feel able to take on the position in full, and that the frequency of newsletters will continue to be dictated by content as we continue to welcome news or articles from all members.

7. Overseas Representatives

Jennifer & Richard Woolcott agreed to continue as the Society's Australian Representatives and this was unanimously upheld by 13 votes. We have not received any nominations or volunteers for the position as the Society's North America Representative, which is now vacant as Jim Witheridge and Annette Witheridge unfortunately needed to resign this year.

8. Appointment of Auditor

Janice Cawsey agreed to act as our Auditor again and this was unanimously upheld by 15 votes.

2020 VAGM Summary Minutes

9. Discussion and Ratification of Revised Constitution

The consensus was in support of the proposed changes, but as additional changes may also be needed to support a change to the subscription model, final revisions will be discussed following a separate committee meeting at some point in the near future, so voting on this matter will therefore take place at a later date.

10. 'Virtual' meetings and separate Reunions

This VAGM has gone well, with more members actively involved than recent previous AGMs, and all have agreed that holding VAGMs with separate social meetings is a good option for the future. This was unanimously upheld by 15 votes.

11. Facebook Pages

Following last year's AGM, we now have a new closed Facebook page, Witheridge Family History Society, which is for members only, and will not be visible to non-members. We welcome news, photos, queries and discussion starters from members, any of which we could also consider marking to be shared in our newsletters for those who do not use Facebook. So far, only a few of our members have joined this page, and it would be good to see a few more familiar faces here.

For the open page, we need to rename, get rid of the old photos, and replace them with colour photos where possible. Any WFHS member may nominate people who are Facebook members to be invited to join this open page. Nominations should be sent to the moderator, who would check the Facebook page of the nominee and then invite him/her to become a Facebook friend. If we could build up our list of Facebook friends, this would generate more interest and possibly new members.

12. Christmas Card for 2020

Hannah has agreed to produce an e-card for us this year, and the Shinglers have also kindly agreed to print and post this card for the 2 members without email addresses, which is much appreciated. The proposal to change to e-cards going forward was unanimously upheld with 12 votes in favour and 3 voting members abstaining due to direct involvement.

13. Date and venue for 2021 Reunion

We will hold a VAGM in 2021, with the date and details of any 'in person' reunion gathering to be confirmed nearer the time, although this will be between May and July.

14. Any other business - No new issues have been raised for discussion during the VAGM.

15 Chairman closes meeting- Successfully completed.