

*W*itheridge

Family History Society

Winter – Spring 2020 - 2021

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Letter from the Chairman

Welcome to the latest edition of the WFHS Newsletter. I can only apologise for this not having happened sooner, however events over the last few months have been dominated by the death of our Founder, Honorary President, and Research Coordinator, Kim Cook. I hope that the tribute which follows will give a little insight into her life and determination, and provide some information that people may not have known about her.



The global pandemic of Covid 19 has meant that most of the world has been in lockdown for at least some of this year, so it is not surprising that we don't have a lot of news to tell, but I'm sure that everyone will join me in sending congratulations to Catherine and Geoff Shingler on the occasion of their Silver Wedding Anniversary.

It is also the time of year to hold the AGM. Like last year, we will be having a virtual AGM, so the reports of the committee officers and the Agenda are included, in line with our Constitution. I would like to invite everyone to participate, and would also ask for help in the running of the society, as we are in very desperate need. Without additional contribution, the society will simply not be viable. Any offer, in any capacity, would be very gratefully received. To paraphrase Lord Kitchener – "Your society needs you!"

Jason Cook

A Tribute to Kim Cook

Celia Tracy Kimmins was born on 10th July 1943, in London.



Being a left handed child brought its' own difficulties. She would often tell - with obvious distaste - of having her left hand tied behind her back at school and being made to write right handed. It was a skill, however, that would later prove useful. It also brought humour. One of her favourite stories was how, as a young child, she was helping a guest tidy up after dinner. The guest asked where they should put a particular item, to which young Celia gave the response "Put it on the boardside where it longsbe". The puzzled guest sought further clarification from an adult, only to be told that it should have been "Put it on the sideboard where it belongs". The family were well used to Celia's spoonerisms!

Secondary school was at St Mary's Hall, Brighton, where Celia made many friends that she stayed in contact with right the way through her life. It was here that she discovered her love for genealogy, and in particular researching her mother's maiden name of Witheridge.



Celia studied journalism at college, and it was here that she was given the nickname "Kimmy", as an abbreviation of her surname. After college, she attempted to break into the very male dominated world of sports journalism, but was continually rejected without even an interview. Finally she decided to abbreviate her nickname further and sent in a CV as Kim Kimmins, and was rewarded with an interview. On the day, the editor asked his secretary to "send him in". "But, sir, he's a she!" came the response. "Doesn't matter, might as well do the interview anyway!". Although Kim didn't get the job, she felt proud of herself for showing that a woman could be just as capable of doing the job as a man.

Kim met Roy in 1962 when he picked up the scarf she dropped in Tooting Jazz Club. To this day, I still do not know whether it was deliberate or not! Love blossomed, and they made plans to get married. However, at that time, getting married younger than 21 meant parental consent would have been required, so Kim and Roy got married in October 1964, soon after their 21st birthdays, and moved into their first house in Morden.



A Tribute to Kim Cook

Jason arrived in 1968, followed by Adam in 1972, before the family moved house - but only half a mile away, to ensure the boys were in the catchment area for the school that Kim and Roy wanted.



When the boys were young, Kim took on a variety of jobs that she could manage to fit in with motherhood, including being a Tupperware rep. I can honestly say that I still have a couple of Tupperware items in my kitchen cupboard! She was also a very active member in the local church. I couldn't tell you when her conversion occurred, just that it was always such an intrinsic part of who she was, that I never felt the need to ask. It was a faith that stayed with her throughout the rest of her life.

The genealogy bug certainly didn't go away either. In 1977 Kim was part of a group who founded the East Surrey Family History Society, aimed at people who lived in the Eastern half of Surrey, to research any name that they were interested in. Whilst this meant a lot of different names, it brought people together in terms of the process of research, and the practicalities of accessing records.

The family moved again in 1981, to West Wickham, in Kent, also for educational reasons. It was to be a stable base for so many changes. Kim and Roy started and ran their own business from that house. The boys grew and spread their wings, moving out in 1991, and of course, it was where Kim finally realised her dream of a society dedicated to the research of one family name.

As we all know, WFHS was founded in May 1987, with the inaugural meeting held in a local church hall in West Wickham. I couldn't tell you exactly how many people were there, or how many are still members of the society, but I do know that a sizeable hall was full enough to have made it more than worthwhile. Logistically speaking, it must have taken a huge amount of effort to single-handedly get that many people to attend, create and present enough content to fill a day, and organise refreshments, etc, but that was Kim – single minded and determined in pursuit of her goal.



A Tribute to Kim Cook

However, what people didn't know was that around that time, Kim was diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME, or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, as it is now known), debilitating her to the extent that some days she couldn't get out of bed. Yet somehow she still managed to run the office for the family business, as well as getting the fledgling WFHS off the ground. On her bad days, her constant companion was the family dog, Jeannie. A rescue dog, but still only a puppy, Kim and Roy brought her home having been given the advice that she would never be a ladies dog, and never be a lap dog. And yet, her favourite place to be was curled up on Kim's lap, which was a great source of comfort.

Eventually the effects of the ME receded, only for Kim to be diagnosed with Fibrosing Alveolitis, a degenerative lung condition. This prompted Kim and Roy to move to Tenterden in Kent, in 1999, in the hope that the cleaner air would help. Amazingly, Kim's health improved to the extent that she was able to go back to work, this time as a property agent for a local company. Not content with that, she also ghost wrote the book "Policeman, Pilot and a Guardian Angel" for Len Trevallion, who was the last surviving Blenheim bomber pilot. The book was published in 2008, after several years of hard work, but Kim only received a minor written credit, much to her annoyance.

Kim and Roy were blessed with grandchildren Ethan (1998), Lauren (2003), and Amelie (2008), and Kim insisted on being called grandma, not nanny – "because I am neither the hired hand, nor a goat."



Tenterden remained Kim and Roy's home until 2014. Following a reclassification of Kim's lung condition to Pulmonary Fibrosis, Kim and Roy decided to move back to Biggin Hill to be nearer to the family. It was also to prove to be a good decision medically, as it put them within reach of Guy's Hospital, and more specifically, their new Cancer Village. Having had an operation for bowel cancer in 2004, Kim had a recurrence in 2015, followed by a couple of bouts of lung cancer, all of which required operations. For someone with compromised lungs, general anaesthetic is a risky undertaking, yet the skill and care of the team at Guys got her through, undoubtedly extending her life. She bore it all with the courage and confidence of someone with a strong faith, showing us how it was possible to live with cancer, with the mantra "a reduced quality of life is better than no life at all".



A Tribute to Kim Cook

Throughout all of this she devoted as much time and energy as possible to the WFHS, as well as writing a book on the history of Biggin Hill, which she self-published, achieving her ambition of being a published author in her own right.



However, the battles didn't stop. More cancer diagnoses, radiotherapy, immunotherapy. But Kim didn't give up. The fighting spirit that so typified her life kept going. A secondary tumour broke her left arm and left it useless, so she drew on her early life experience and wrote right handed. Unfortunately, the cancer spread further, being deemed untreatable, and she passed peacefully on 18th April 2021, with Roy, Jason and Adam at her side.

I would like to think that, for now, she has been reunited with Jeannie, and the two of them are sitting peacefully together, just as they did in life.



Celia (Kim) Cook 10.07.1943 – 18.04.2021

Family News



July 2021 marks Catherine & Geoff Shingler's Silver Wedding. Catherine created the heart design on paper and Hannah then created this postcard digitally. Some people we know will receive a professionally printed version, either in person or by post, and others will receive it by email so the occasion can still be marked and shared.

Geoff Shingler

Treasurer's Report

As usual our income is wholly from members subscriptions.

By having a virtual AGM, we have managed to cut our outgoings to just secretarial expenses, membership of the Federation of Family History Societies, and a thank you gift to our auditor. Even so we are barely breaking even.

Liz Davey

Membership Secretary's Report

There have been no changes in membership.

Geoff Shingler

Webmaster's Report

The site is currently hosted at Dreamhost in California, USA.

The site is lacking content, both text and pictures. If anyone has anything suitable please send it to bill@dwyne.net. No need to do any preparation, I just need the best scan quality possible. I tend to do most of my web work in the winter time!

Web Server Stats for [REDACTED]

Figures in parentheses refer to the 7-day period ending Jun 27 2021

Successful requests: 14,410 (3,084)

Average successful requests per day: 554 (440)

Successful requests for pages: 12,714 (2,610)

Average successful requests for pages per day: 489 (372)

Failed requests: 5,840 (21)

Redirected requests: 894 (25)

Distinct files requested: 1,147 (176)

Distinct hosts served: 1,168 (96)

Data transferred: 680.30 megabytes (214.65 megabytes)

Average data transferred per day: 26.17 megabytes (30.66 megabytes)

In my opinion the website receives reasonable exposure for a personal/non-commercial web site. All of the above numbers include web crawlers (search engines) etc.

Bill Dwyne

Chairman's Report

Usually, my report would be at the top of the list. However, I have specifically requested that it be the last item on the list as I wished to summarise what the other committee members have put. Unsurprisingly, given the global pandemic, there hasn't been a great deal to report. However, what is clear is that we cannot carry on as we are for much longer. We urgently need help to keep the society functioning, otherwise it will simply not be viable. This could take the form of a role on the committee, ideas/action for fundraising, or even research and outreach for new members. Given that we have moved to a virtual AGM, it opens the door for any of our overseas members to have a greater involvement. Any offer to help, in any capacity, would be greatly appreciated.

Jason Cook

VAGM 2021

Commencing Friday 20 August 2021

Timetable

Friday 20 August	Chairman opens meeting
Friday 20 - Sunday 29 August	Virtual discussion between participating members by 'reply all' email
	Voting opens for any planned items e.g. Committee nominations, if any are no longer running unopposed at that time
Sunday 29 August	Discussion content is shared with non-participating members (contact details withheld)
Monday 30 August - Sunday 5 September	Voting opens for any new items raised during discussion (and remains open for planned items)
Monday 6 - Sunday 12 September	Extended voting window for non-email members only (to allow time for post)
Monday 13 September onwards	Voting results to be shared once tallied
	Summary minutes to be included in next Newsletter

All full members, and additional family members over the age of 16 who are covered by that membership, are entitled to vote, provided the membership is fully paid up at the date of the meeting. Email votes, and any enquiries outside of the VAGM 'reply all' discussion, should continue to be sent to: amykennedy.ask@gmail.com

The correspondence address for any postal votes, for this year only, will be:

Flat 2 Branscombe Court, 109 Westmoreland Road
Bromley
Kent
BR2 0UL

If you took part in last year's VAGM but would prefer not to participate this year, or if you had previously declined to participate but would like to do so this year, please let us know via the above contact details at least 1 week in advance of the VAGM. Anyone wishing to participate this year who has not done so previously will need to return the GDPR declaration found in the Appendix to this Newsletter.

VAGM 2021 Agenda

1. Chairman's opening and welcome

2. Apologies for absence

3. Outstanding matters arising from the Minutes of the 2020 VAGM

The approved Summary Minutes were shared in your previous Newsletter following last year's VAGM, and can also be found in the Appendix to this Newsletter.

4. Matters arising from the 2021 Officers' Reports

The Officers' Reports can be found on pages 8-9 of this Newsletter.

5. Election of Officers and Committee Members

The following Officers and Committee Members have agreed to stand again, and will continue in these positions automatically if no further nominations are received and they run unopposed, in line with our Constitution.

Chairman	Jason Cook
Vice Chairman	Chris Davey
Membership Secretary	Geoff Shingler
Treasurer	Liz Davey
Assistant Treasurer	Chris Davey
Facebook Moderators	Maxine Neale
	Bill Dwyne
Webmaster	Bill Dwyne
Committee Members	Roy Cook
	Philip Milnes-Smith

Nominations are welcome for any position, and we presently have vacancies for the following:

- additional Facebook Moderator/s
- Secretary (as this is presently a non-member paid position to fill the vacancy)
- Newsletter Editor (as this is presently covered by the Secretary)
- Research Co-Ordinator, and
- additional Committee Member/s.

Amy Kennedy has agreed to continue acting as Secretary if an external appointment is still required, but if none feel able to collaborate with her as Newsletter Editor or take on the position in full, the frequency of newsletters will continue to be dictated by content, as we continue to welcome news or articles from all members.

6. Overseas Representatives

Unfortunately, **Jennifer & Richard Woolcott** will be unable to continue as the Society's Australian Representatives this year for personal reasons. We would like to record our thanks for all their sterling service, and send our fondest wishes for the best possible health in the coming year.

The position as the Society's North America Representative remains vacant.

We are still welcoming volunteers and/or nominations for both positions. However, if none are forthcoming, we may need to consider alternative options e.g. one suggestion, given our increased use of digital communication in recent years, would be to appoint temporary Overseas Representatives specifically to handle local events such as Reunions, and manage other elements of the original role centrally.

7. Appointment of Auditor

We are very grateful to Janice Cawsey who has kindly agreed to act as our Auditor again for the current year.

8. Plans for the future of the Society

9. Any other business

10. Chairman closes meeting

Research Support

Question from a previous Newsletter:

I noted with interest Gordon Witheridge – who lived in Leicester – was related to the Ermington Witheridges and included Northmore in his family tree.

My maiden name is Northmore. My mother (Elsie Mary White) married Frederick Stanley John Northmore. My grandfather John Northmore came from Ermington. There were lots of John Northmore's! My mothers mum (Emily Ellen Witheridge) married Henry Albert White (known to us his family as Albert Henry White).

I insert two photos of my maternal grandmother Emily Ellen White nee Witheridge (one photo when she was in her 50's (I believe she was 52) and another when she was older, wearing a hat. My grandmother also had a sister (with the same name, who died before she was born). The other photo, I understand, is her sister Rhoda Witheridge (wearing glasses). I have no idea if Rhoda married. Perhaps your records may have this information?

I have not included the name or contact details of the member who asked this question to protect their personal information, but if anyone is able to assist in answering this from their own research then please could they reply to me at amykennedy.ask@gmail.com so that I may pass this on.



Appendix: VAGM 2020 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.

Appendix: VAGM 2020 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.

Appendix: GDPR Declaration

I consent to my email address being shared with all members of the Witheridge FHS for the purpose of enabling group discussions on Society business. (i.e. virtual meetings).

I am aware that if I decline I will be automatically excluded from participation in any virtual meeting but will still be eligible to vote and will receive a copy of any discussions after the meeting ends.

I agree that I will not use any Witheridge FHS member's email address, which has been made available to me for the purpose of enabling group discussions on Society business, for any other purpose without their express consent.

I am aware that if I decline I must be automatically excluded from participation in any virtual meeting for the protection of other members' privacy, but I will still be eligible to vote and will receive a redacted copy of any discussions or meeting minutes after the meeting ends.