

BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE

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BEDFORDSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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BLHA AGM & ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017

Saturday, 24 June 2017

Hosted by Bedford Architectural, Archaeological, and Local History Society
at Priory Methodist Church, Newnham Avenue, Bedford MK41 9QJ

BEDFORD THROUGH THE AGES

Conference Programme

9.00 am–9.30 am: **Coffee & Registration**

9.30 am–10 am: **BLHA Annual General Meeting**

BLHA Annual Conference: BEDFORD THROUGH THE AGES

10 am–10.15 am: **Introduction by Chairman and Welcome by Dave Hodgson, Mayor of Bedford**

10.15 am–11.15 am: **The Great Ouse Valley in Early Times:** Mike Luke (Albion Archaeology). A unique overview (from the Kempston & Biddenham excavations) of the changing landscape and early settlement within the Ouse Valley from 4,000 BC to the 5th century AD.

11.15 am–11.40 am: **Bedford and its River:** Bob Ricketts (President, BAALHS). How the Ouse shaped the town's development and economy: sets the scene for the walking tour.

11.40 am–1 pm: Your choice of EITHER:

Historical Walking Tour: Bedford Castle and The Embankment: led by David Fowler & the Bedford Town Guides (free coach provided from Priory Church to Castle Mound and return) OR

Illustrated talk and historic films: Flight Research at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE), speaker, Barry Tomlinson (Bedford Aeronautical Heritage Group). At Thurleigh, RAE (Bedford) conducted world-class aeronautical research, into automatic landing in fog, naval operations from aircraft carriers, Concorde aerodynamics, vertical take-off and landing, helicopter performance and airport landing aids now accepted world-wide.

1 pm–2:15 pm: **Buffet Lunch plus standing displays and stalls**

2.15 pm–3 pm: **1–4 St Paul's Square – People and Place:** Pamela Birch (County Archivist, Bedfordshire Archives). Recently-restored, award-winning 1–4 St. Paul's Square is one of Bedford's earliest secular buildings (c1460). Documents from the archives will be used to reveal the story of the buildings and their occupiers.

3 pm–3.30pm: **Bedford – 'a bookless town' – the struggle for a Public Library:** Bob Ricketts. Bedford didn't have a free public library until 1937 – 40 years after Luton. Bob tells the story of the town's 'Free Library movement' and its leading lights.

3.30 pm–4.00 pm: **Afternoon Tea & Cakes**

4 pm–4.30 pm: **Preserving Bedford's Heritage and closing remarks,** David Fowler (Co-Chair of BAALHS Conservation Committee)

There is full disabled access. There is a free car park at the Church and plenty of parking in nearby streets.

Cost for the day: £20 including buffet lunch and refreshments.

(No charge for those who only wish to attend the AGM)

**Please send booking forms with payment (cheques payable to BAALHS) by 1 June 2017 to:
Mrs Margaret Carpenter (Hon. Treasurer BAALHS), 4 Harrington Drive, Bedford MK41 8DB
see booking form below**

2. For Individual Members, Corporate Bodies & Members' guests

Please reserve me places for the BLHA Conference on **Saturday 24th June 2017** at **Priory Methodist Church, Newnham Avenue, Bedford, MK41 9QJ**

I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to **'BAALHS'**

Please note any special dietary requirements (e.g. Vegetarian, Vegan, gluten-free)

.....

Forename.....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Tel..... Email.....

The names of other attendees are:

Forename Surname Special dietary requirements

Forename	Surname	Special dietary requirements

How many of your attendees will wish to go on the walking tour? (insert number)

Return to: Mrs M Carpenter BAALHS, 4 Harrington Drive, Bedford MK41 8DB, tel 01234 360003

Bedfordshire Local History Association

Spring Event 2017

A visit to Harlington Manor: Friday, 28 April 2017, at 1.30pm

Harlington Manor has hall house antecedents dating from the late 14th century, but 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and early 20th century alterations and features can be seen, including Tudor work, a late Restoration dining room and possibly, two priest holes. John Bunyan was interrogated and imprisoned here, while Charles II had an easier stay.

Harlington Manor is in the village of Harlington, between Toddington and Westoning, very close to Junction 12 of the M1. Entering the village from the M1, after passing the station on the right, at the village crossroads turn left into Westoning Road. The entrance is on the left and there is limited parking – entry through the gates is by the entry phone button on the right. There is plenty of parking in the street with the alternative of the village hall car park nearby, off Sundon Road. For those visitors with satnav, the postcode is LU5 6LD. There is no wheelchair access as such and are steps in the garden, into the ground floor and various rooms. If this is a problem, some rooms will have to be seen from outside. The visit includes a tour of the house, with tea or coffee and home-made cakes and lasts approximately 2hrs 30mins. The cost is £15 per person and there is a limit of 25 visitors. Please book early to avoid disappointment: it is expected that this event will be very popular. Apply to Colin West, BLHA, Lincoln House, 14 Fieldfare View, Wixams, Bedford MK42 6BL, include your telephone number and a cheque payable to Bedfordshire Local History Association. The deadline for applications is Monday, 3 April. To register your interest or for further details please contact Colin at colinjohnwest4@gmail.com or telephone, 01234 743752.

Notes and news

BLHA Autumn event. Our Autumn Event will be a visit to Sulgrave Manor in the afternoon of Saturday, 30 September, in south Northamptonshire. It is a Tudor and Georgian house built by the direct ancestors of George Washington, first President of the United States. Civil War, financial ruin and a shipwreck led Washington's great-grandfather to seek a fresh start in the New World. The visit will include a guided tour of the gardens and the house, plus a cream tea. The fee will be £15.60 per person. More information will be published in our Summer issue.

Grafton Regis events. The small south Northamptonshire village of Grafton Regis is organising 'Grafton Regis – 1,000 Years in 100 Minutes' to bring their little-known history to life. Three events are planned: on Saturday 6 May; Saturday, 17 June and Saturday, 7 October, starting at 2.30pm in the Village Hall to meet some famous people from medieval times with links to Grafton:

Elizabeth Woodville (the White Queen) and Richard III, in authentic costume. There will then be a leisurely walk through the village to the beautiful Church of St Mary the Virgin, meeting Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, Elizabeth I and others from the Tudor period en-route. More events from Grafton's history, are met in the Church. Characters from more recent times are to be met at the Village Hall, where tea and cakes will be served. The cost is £8.50 for adults, £1.00 for under 16s, and under 5s free. All profits are divided between the funds for the maintenance of the Village Hall and the Church. Booking is essential. Please phone Kathy on 0791 009 2132 or email keith.harry@btinternet.com

New Light on Dr George Witt 1804–69: Part 2: Australia and later 1849–69

Departure from Bedford

On 1 January 1849 Witt unexpectedly resigned from his post at the Bedford Infirmary. His letter of resignation told the Board of Governors: 'Circumstances over which I have no control have induced me to withdraw myself, for a time, from my professional labours, and I therefore feel it is my duty to resign the office of Physician to your Institution.'¹

Bernard Cashman² suggests his resignation was caused by ill-health. Perhaps the Leighton Buzzard accident may have had something to do with it. In a letter from Australia of 6 April 1851, Witt told his friend Thomas Barnard that: 'I am told that I look almost as well as ever; but I find it out if I attempt to walk fast up hill and I am obliged to stop and admire the prospect . . .'

However it is worth noting that Mrs Witt may have been the invalid, for in the same letter Witt speaks of her being: 'at times . . . very feeble and languid . . .'

The poor of Bedford 'put their mites together' and obtained a silver memorial expressive of their attachment to the Doctor. It was inscribed:

This medal is presented to George Witt, Esq, MD, by the Poor of Bedford and its vicinity, on his resigning the office of Physician to the Bedford Infirmary and Fever Hospital, which he held for 21 years, as a grateful testimony of their remembrance of his great merit, indefatigable diligence, and ardent zeal, in seeking out the abodes of hopeless anguish and ever striving to alleviate the distresses of the Poor and relieve their affliction

MARY FRANKLIN

and on the reverse:

Blessed is he that considereth the Poor. The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.'

Psalm 41, v 1.³

The Medical Museum

Almost as soon as he arrived in Bedford, George Witt had set up a Medical Museum with the support of Dr Joseph Thackeray, the Physician of the Infirmary. Bernard Cashman suggests that the nucleus of the Museum was Witt's own collection of scientific objects.⁴ Wherever the objects came from, Thackeray was generous in his praise of Witt for this initiative:

In submitting to you a statement professedly touching on every point of interest connected with the Institution, I should be culpable in omitting all mention of the Museum. This collection, exhibiting proofs of the great talent, zeal and industry of our valuable House-Surgeon, Dr Witt, attracts many visitors to the House, and engages in consequence new and active friends in the service of the Charity.⁵

Witt was clearly always interested in museums and contributed a battle axe to the private museum of his friend John Thomas Brooks, who in return described Witt as the 'Valued friend of the proprietor [ie, Brooks himself], a Man whom to know is to love and esteem.'⁶

On 10 September 1845 Witt also gave a 1414 deed relating to Middleton, Suffolk, to Brooks's son Willy. A note on the deed says that Witt had acquired it from a Mrs Reeve.⁷

When he came to resign from the Infirmary, Dr Witt was offered by the Governors the chance to have a portrait of himself painted and hung in the Committee Room of Bedford Infirmary. He declined and instead the Governors suggested:

a measure, which at the same time as it will be commemorative of his eminent and most valuable services to the Infirmary, will preserve to Bedford and its Neighbourhood a useful and interesting object, the purchase by subscription of the Museum, which with so much labour and skill he has formed, and that it be placed in the hands of Trustees with Dr Witt's name attached to it. to be deposited in the Bedford Rooms or other suitable place.⁸

A subscription was immediately opened:

DR WITT'S MUSEUM

It having been proposed to place Dr Witt's Museum in the Bedford Rooms as a

PERMANENT MUSEUM

for Public Exhibition, provided the expense of preparing a room for that purpose be met by the inhabitants of Bedford.

Subscriptions will be received for the above object, by W BLOWER, Surgeon.
J ANTHONY, Chemist. J BULL, jun, jeweller. J WYATT, 'Times' Printing Office.
J COOMBS, Chemist. Bedford Apr 13 1849⁹

We may regret the loss of the portrait. The *ODNB* knows of no likeness of him. I have searched the Heinz Archive of the National Portrait Gallery and found no portrait known there either.

As to the Museum, Witt seems to have been personally engaged in its removal and cataloguing immediately after his resignation from the Infirmary. Dr William Blower of Mill Street, Bedford, received a letter from Witt dated 19 May 1849 telling him that the Museum was laid out according to Blumenbach's arrangement of Natural History and asking him (Blower) to take charge of the manuscript catalogue that Witt had prepared on this principle.¹⁰

To Australia

Witt's interest in Australia dates back at least to 1842 when he pasted into *Local Squabbles* a cutting from the *Morning Post* on 'Australia and the Comparative Merits of her Provinces', particularly singling out Gippsland in Victoria, where Dr Hedley (see below) eventually went.¹¹

The Witts travelled to Australia with a servant on the 420-ton barque *Hamlet* (Captain Wilson) – that is to say a sailing ship. It had left London, called at Plymouth on 30 August, arrived at Port Phillip on 11 December and Sydney on 30 December 1849.¹² The Witts were at Woolloomooloo (now a harbourside suburb of Sydney) before 1 August 1850, the date when they moved thence to Sydney proper. They stayed in Sydney for the rest of their time in Australia.¹³

When in 1847, the other physician at the Bedford Infirmary, Dr Mesham, committed suicide he had been succeeded by a Dr George Dixon Hedley. Hedley also retired in 1849 and went to Australia.¹⁴ Hedley was the maiden surname of Mrs Witt – they had married in 1832, so I suspect Dr Hedley is a relation, and just possibly it was because of the Witts that the Hedleys also went to Australia – a few months later than the Witts.¹⁵ If so, although Dr Hedley is mentioned in Witt's letter to Barnard, the implication is that they are not that close ('We hear from Dr Hedley . . .'). Dr Hedley was in Gippsland, Victoria, about 400 miles from Sydney.¹⁶

Witt's business interests

It is generally stated that Witt amassed a fortune in Australia – from 'banking and speculation' according to the *ODNB*. Australian newspapers shed light on six companies Witt was associated with.

Already by 17 October 1850, Witt attended the shareholders' meeting for the *Bank of New South Wales*, when he seconded a motion of a Mr Wentworth to appoint Mr D Larnach General Manager of the bank.¹⁷ Not a great deal, you may think but both the names associated with Witt, Wentworth and Larnach, turn out to be major business colleagues. In fact this meeting was an important one. The bank was going through a period of upheaval. The bank's 1828 deed of

settlement was no longer fit for purpose, there were now some Colonial Bank Regulations to be complied with, the bank wanted to open branches, and increase its capital. On top of all this was the upheaval caused by the discovery of gold.¹⁸ So, the old bank was effectively wound up and a new bank founded. The October 1850 meeting was the final meeting of the old bank, showing that Witt was certainly a shareholder in the old bank and almost certainly in the new one, too.

In 1853, the bank opened a London branch with a separate Board of Directors. Wentworth was a London Director, though no longer a Sydney Director. So, too, was Donald Larnach. Was Witt?¹⁹

Meanwhile Witt was also involved with the *Commercial Banking Co*, being elected auditor for the ensuing year on 8 July 1851,²⁰ and a director on 30 July 1852.²¹ In October 1852 Witt was elected to a committee of the Bank to use £300 for a testimonial for the exertions of Mr E Knox, Chairman of the Bank.

Another business venture was the *New South Wales Marine Assurance Company* of which George Witt was also the auditor along with Donald Larnach on 8 November 1851.²² The company had been incorporated in New South Wales by statute of 1 December 1851.²³ In October 1852 Witt was again elected an auditor.²⁴ The company eventually became part of the UK's Commercial Union and is now represented by Aviva.²⁵

But the main area of Witt's business was in mines. One Edward Hammond Hargraves began prospecting in New South Wales in January 1851 and initiated the Australian gold rush.²⁶ Many of the companies sought capital in the UK – almost invariably with disastrous results. As the voyage to Australia took about three months, title was not always clear and letters could be lost in the post, it was really no way to run a company which expected to be ahead of its rivals in point of time.²⁷ It is noticeable that, with one exception, Witt seems to have invested in companies based in New South Wales.

Among the gold companies, we meet again Messrs Wentworth and Larnach. Wentworth first: by November 1851 Witt was promoting the *Wentworth Gold Field Company*.²⁸ William Charles Wentworth, 1790–1872, is an important man and has a lengthy entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* as an 'explorer, author, barrister, landowner and statesman'.²⁹ As an explorer, he had purchased land at what became Lucknow, NSW, in 1838. In May 1851 it became the site of Australia's second gold discovery. Witt was one of five trustees of the company into whose hands money for subscriptions for the shares in the company were to be paid, pending the sale of all the shares at which time the relevant parcels of land would be conveyed to the subscribers. The objective was to buy out Wentworth. By January 1852 the substantial sum of £5,000 had been amassed³⁰ and a modified buy-out with Wentworth participating in the equity occurred in April 1852.

By March 1852 Witt had ceased to be a trustee and became a director of the Company.³¹ By June 1853 the company put up a Bill in the New South Wales Legislature for incorporation of the company.³² Despite this, progress in finding good seams must have been slow, for in November 1852 it was reported that Witt and another director visited the prospectors: 'At present we are in ignorance as to the time when the company purpose commencing operations [ie, mining].'³³ The Wentworth Main Mine at Lucknow, NSW, is now abandoned due to flooding.³⁴

Witt's name comes up in reports of the *Great Nugget Vein Gold Mining Company* as moving the acceptance of the Report and Accounts at a General Meeting, though I cannot find that he held office in the company.³⁵ This was the only company Witt was associated with that sought capitalisation in London. In May 1853 it was launched in Australia, to be funded as to one-third from the proprietors of the land at Louisa Creek, one-third in New South Wales, and one-third in London. In London, the £2 shares (plus a further £1 5s 0d 'for the benefit of the company at large') were fully subscribed in a single day in December 1852 and rapidly sold on at a further premium of £2 to £4 a share. The £1 5s 0d surcharge did not apply to the Sydney shares, though there, too, they sold at a premium at about this time. Furthermore, the owners of the land had an option on an additional 10,000 shares each at only 10s a share. This caused a lot of friction between London and Sydney shareholders. In January 1854, the *Mining Journal* accused the company of fleecing the London shareholders.

In July of the same year the first news that the results might not be what had been promised started to surface in London – no doubt Sydney shareholders had been aware of it for some time earlier. Witt left Australia in January 1854, so presumably got out well before this. The company was finally wound up in 1858.³⁶

Finally, there is the *Ophir Copper Mining Company*. I cannot find when Witt became a director, but he resigned his directorship – presumably because of his departure from Australia – by March 1854.³⁷ The chairman was Randolph John Want who was also an Elective Trustee of the Australian Museum – as we shall see, an interest he shared with Witt.³⁸ In August 1854 when Witt was back in England, the company found that a deed whereby the original owners of the mine released their interest had not been signed by Witt and it had to be sent to him in England for signature.³⁹

By February 1856 the company was in trouble, having failed to raise additional funds through a scrip issue.⁴⁰ Witt was presumably out by then.

A curious feature of Australian press reports of this period is the recording of imports and exports. That Witt should import '1 case merchandise' from London on 26 January 1851 may be unremarkable.⁴¹ More interesting is '1 case

(pianoforte)' imported by Witt on the *Mary Hannatyne* from London on 25 April of the same year.⁴² And what are we to make of Witt appearing in the list of exports of '24 packages furniture' in the *Comet* on 1 November 1851, bound for Nelson? It looks as though Witt was running a general import/export business and perhaps the piano was not for his own use but that of a customer in Nelson.⁴³

Witt at his death in 1869 was worth £45,000 – say £4.5 million in today's money – a sum which had enabled him to live in some style. After his death his widow was living in Knightsbridge with two nieces staying with her and no less than four servants.⁴⁴ The Australian newspapers give the value of shares in which Witt held a stake. We do not of course know how many of each share he owned, nor when and for what price he purchased them, but the figures show a substantial premium for those who got in early. If we take December 1853 as the probable date of selling of his shares in time for him to board his ship later that month, the shares he is known to have owned (and there may of course be others) were valued as follows⁴⁵:

<i>Share</i>	<i>Amount of share</i>	<i>Amount paid</i> ⁴⁶	<i>Last dividend</i>	<i>Price per share</i>
Bank of New South Wales ⁴⁷	£20	£20	£10 plus bonus of 5% to Oct 1853	£31½–32
Commercial Banking Co	£25	£25	£10 plus bonus of 5% to July 1853	£39–40
NSW Marine Assurance Co	£20	£2	£10	£6¾–7
Ophir Copper Mining Co	£5	£5	none	£6½–7
Great Nugget Vein Gold Mining Co	£2	£1	£10	£1¼–1½
Wentworth Gold Mining Co	£1	£1	None	No figure for Dec, but valued as £10 in Nov 1853 ⁴⁸

The turkey seems to be Wentworth, but this may not be Witt's company. It will be noted that Witt was associated with the Wentworth Gold Field Co, which was wound up in September 1856.⁴⁹ If it is the same company, and if Witt got out in November 1853, he would have done all right even on this. The other shares constitute a portfolio anyone might envy.

Witt as a citizen and doctor

In April 1852 Witt submitted testimonials as a result of which he was deemed a legally qualified medical practitioner by the members of the New South Wales Medical Board.⁵⁰

The only details we have of his medical career in Australia are matters largely of chance. For example, in June 1852 the Coroner called Witt in to conduct an autopsy on a man called Hugh Cameron. Cameron had been accidentally kicked

in the head by a horse. Various doctors had attended him, including a Dr McKellar. Later a Dr West trepanned the unfortunate Cameron in the presence of two other doctors, Fullerton and àBeckett. Despite this, Cameron died and McKellar was accused of incompetence. McKellar appealed to the Coroner, asking for a *post mortem*. The horrific evidence suggested that perhaps there was a greater risk because the trepanning had not taken place till rather late after the original wound and there was already a strong build-up of an abscess on the brain, but none of the doctors was to blame.⁵¹

Another inquest provides another medical glimpse of Witt – this time at Hartley in December 1853, when one Thomas Fitzpatrick fell down Mount Victoria in a mail coach and was severely injured and unable to speak and later died. Dr Cannell from Bathurst attended him and

the morning after the deceased [Fitzpatrick] came to my house, Dr Witt was passing; I called him to see the deceased, and he said that all that could be done for him was to give him some opening medicine, which I gave him according to direction.

Witt is not mentioned again and was not called upon to give evidence.⁵²

It is to be noted that in both these cases other professionals were happy to consult Witt as being especially competent.

Witt was evidently a respected citizen of Sydney and attended every civic event – in Aug 1850 he was at the fancy dress party given by the retiring mayor George Hill for hundreds of Sydney's élite at the Victoria Theatre.⁵³ He also attended the celebratory levee for the inauguration of Sir Charles FitzRoy as Governor-General of the Australian Colonies, in addition to his existing title of Governor of New South Wales, on 12 June 1851.⁵⁴ In May 1852, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's birthday, the Governor-General held a levee to which the great and the good of Sydney repaired, including Witt.⁵⁵

He also contributed to a group of special pillars, commemorative of the various territories comprised in the ecclesiastical Province, in the new Anglican Metropolitan Cathedral in Sydney. Witt subscribed £1.⁵⁶

Those who have followed the development of Witt's Museum in Bedford will not be surprised to find him involved in the Australian Museum (known as the Sydney Museum between 1827 and 1836). Thus: 'His Excellency the Governor-General has directed it is to be notified that Arthur Martin àBeckett, Esq⁵⁷ and George Witt, Esq, MD, have been appointed to be members of the Committee of Superintendence of the Australian Museum.'⁵⁸

More light was shed on this project in the following May. The Governor-General had 'sent down' a Bill to incorporate and endow the Sydney Museum. It required 24 trustees from the Chief Justice and the Colonial Secretary downwards and also included a further 12 elective trustees, among whom was Witt: 'This body is to have entire management of the institution, and it is

proposed to grant them an endowment from the General Revenue of £1,000 per annum.⁵⁹ This initiative was followed by a letter from the Australian Museum's Secretary to the Colonial Secretary enclosing a Report stating that the collections of animals, plants and minerals had increased so greatly as to require their own building (the building was started in 1849 and was not completed until 1857⁶⁰). Furthermore:

the Committee have found that, unless the institution be incorporated, the public property confided to their care cannot be considered secure, and that they themselves are individually not safe from private actions in the Courts of Law, while merely performing their duties as trustees to the public.

They therefore solicited a Bill of incorporation.⁶¹

In July 1853 Witt took over temporarily the post of Honorary Secretary to the Trustees of the Museum.⁶²

This is also the point at which to mention Witt's involvement with the establishment of a public Zoological Institute in June 1852, Witt being voted onto a Provisional Committee to take the matter further. However, it seems the first public zoo was not opened in Sydney till 1884 – long after Witt had left the Colony.⁶³

On his departure from Australia, Witt presented the Museum with '4 specimens of fossil wood, from Wollongong'.⁶⁴

Departure from Australia

Witt sailed for London on the *Ellenborough*, Captain Thornhill, cleared for departure on 27 December 1853⁶⁵:

The *Ellenborough* was towed by HMS *Acheron* outside the Heads yesterday morning [1 January 1854]. The punctuality of this ship's departure demands a passing notice. Habits of great uncertainty as to the sailing of ships are in full force here, and the good example lately set by the *Great Britain*, and now in the *Ellenborough*, will, we hope, have its due effect. Nothing can be more prejudicial to a mercantile community than shifting delays, and everybody connected with the shipping in this port, knows they are frequent and vexatious enough. We should imagine that if a large ship like the *Ellenborough* can have all her affairs arranged, her business finished, and her passengers aboard, and herself under weigh at the advertised time, that smaller craft could easily enough do the same. It is for the advantage of Captains, Owners, and Agents, that ships should be as much distinguished for punctuality of departure as for speed of sailing. Credit is due to Messrs Young and Co the Agents of the *Ellenborough*, for their exertions in expediting the sailing of the vessel. If common fortune attends him, Captain Thornhill expects to arrive in London about March 29th.⁶⁶

Perhaps the punctuality was at least in part because the *Ellenborough* was carrying over £7,000 in gold (the largest single share was of Witt's Bank of New South Wales at £2,500). This figure of £7,000 had miraculously risen to 'upwards of £28,000' when the *Ellenborough* berthed in England.⁶⁷

The *Ellenborough's* voyage was described as follows:

The splendid ship *Ellenborough*, 1091 tons, Captain Thornhill, belonging to Messrs Watson and Tyrrell of London, arrived off Penzance, Cornwall, on Friday afternoon, April 7th, from Sydney, having left there on 1st January, and has touched at no other place on the voyage. She brings home 5000 ounces of gold dust, thirty passengers, and a full cargo of wool, tallow and gum. The *Ellenborough* came home by way of Cape Horn, which she rounded on the 31st January. She sighted several icebergs, some of them within half a mile of the ship's course. Spoke the *City of Kandy*, British ship, off Pernambuco, bound to Rio, on the 5th of March; and on the same day the British ship *Rolling Wave*, bound to Calcutta. On January 30th spoke the *Shamrock* barque, and about the 6th of February the barque *Agustus Snida*,⁶⁸ both bound to Cork, with guano from Callao. Spoke on Thursday last the *Minerva* steamer, having troops on board bound for the seat of [the Crimean] war – all well.⁶⁹

She actually arrived 8 April 1854.⁷⁰

Witt seems to have left Australia in something of a hurry, because his house was first advertised for sale on 10 March 1854 – some three months after his departure. The house had a frontage of 70 feet 9 inches to Bligh Street. It was brick, stuccoed and well raised, with on the ground floor 'four capital rooms', and a 'verandah, capacious and stone flagged, the front of which is planted with oleanders and other shrubs, rendering it cool and private'. There were six rooms on the first floor and stables and a coach house.

As late as 1870, after Witt's death, his family in London continued to own shares in the Bank of New South Wales.⁷¹ His widow and brother Samuel are named, together with a John Witt jointly with a Henry Ramsay. Two quite different names joined in this way as proprietors often indicate trustees, perhaps for children in Witt's family. The obvious people to choose as trustees are lawyers or clergymen. John Witt is probably Dr George Witt's nephew, John George Witt (1836–1906), called to the Bar in 1864 and later a successful QC. However, I cannot trace a suitable Henry Ramsay who was a lawyer or clergyman or living in Cambridgeshire.

Witt never returned to Australia. Instead he busied himself with his collections and other intellectual interests such as Turkish Baths.

RICHARD MORGAN

Notes

1. *Bedford Times*, Sat, Jan 6 1849, in *Local Squabbles*, 177.

2. Bernard Cashman in *Private Charity and the Public Purse: The Development of Bedford General Hospital 1794–1988* (North Bedfordshire Health Authority, Bedford, 1988), p 138.

3. *Bedford Mercury*, Sat, 3 Mar 1849, in *Local Squabbles* 177. 4. Cashman *op cit*, p 123.
5. *27th Annual Report of the Bedford Infirmary*, 24 June 1829–24 Jun 1830 in *Local Squabbles*, 8.
6. From *Flitwick House and its Gardens Grounds &c*, MS compilation by John Thomas Brooks c 1838 and added to later at BARS LL17/284, quoted in Richard Morgan *Life Runneth as the Brooks: The Brooks family in Bedfordshire* (Pagoda Tree Press, Bath, 2011), p 74.
7. The deed descended to me and is at present on loan to the Suffolk Record Office. Mrs Reeve may be the wife of John Reeve of The Ridge, Rosedale, Victoria, a friend of the Hedleys (see p 2 and footnote 4 of http://www.theminters.co.uk/johnspages/helen_3_openoffice.html). They may also be the Mr and Mrs Reeve who travelled out to Australia with the Witts – see below.
8. Circular letter of the Governors soliciting subscriptions 30 Mar 1849 in *Local Squabbles*, 180.
9. *Local Squabbles*, 181.
10. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach 1762–1840 was a biologist who established the various subspecies of *Homo sapiens*. The letter is at Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service (BARS) BD 1392/2.
11. *Morning Post*, Sat, 27 Aug 1842, in *Local Squabbles*, 151.
12. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Port Phillip, Sat, 22 Dec 1849; Sydney, Mon, 31 Dec 1849. The other passengers included a Mr and Mrs Reeve. Mrs Reeve may be the previous owner of the old document given to Willy Brooks – see above.
13. Witt's letter to Barnard – see below.
14. *Bedford Times*, Sat, 22 May 1847, and *Bedford Mercury*, Sat, 26 June 1847, both at *Local Squabbles*, 175; Cashman, pp 132–133 and 138, who, however, insists on spelling his name as Headley.
15. The website mentioned in the next footnote says that Drs Witt and Hedley were brothers-in-law. The Hedleys had travelled out on the 380-ton barque *Brothers* (Capt Ellery) leaving on 14 Oct 1849 and arriving at Port Phillip for Melbourne on 10 Mar 1850.
16. Witt to his old friend Thomas Barnard in Bedford 6 Apr 1851 in Andrew Underwood (Ed), 'Some Letters from Bedfordshire Pioneers in Australia, 1842–86', in *Some Bedfordshire Diaries* (BHRS Vol XL Streatley, 1960), pp 233–235. I also found a very helpful and informative paper of the Hedley family's emigration of 1849–50 at:
http://www.theminters.co.uk/johnspages/helen_3_openoffice.html.
17. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sat, 19 Oct 1850, p 5. See also *Empire*, Fri, 16 Jan 1852, p 3. Donald Larnach 1817–96, was a Scot, and in particular pressed for investment in gold fields. As such Witt must have found him a natural ally: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 5 (Melbourne University Press, 1974).
18. R F Holder, *Bank of New South Wales: A History* (Sydney, 1970), pp 147–157.
19. Holder, pp 188, 198, 199. The book has no list of London directors but, on pp 937–940 is a list of Sydney directors. Witt is not there, but neither is Wentworth, though pp 122, 163 show he was a director, and even at one time acting chairman, of the old bank.
20. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wed, 9 Jul 1851, p 2. The Commercial Banking Company had been founded in 1834 and is now known as the National Australia Bank (<http://www.cbcbank.com.au>) – not to be confused with the Commercial Bank of Australia which was not founded till 1866 and merged with the Bank of New South Wales in 1983 to become Westpac (Wikipedia).
21. *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, Sat, 31 Jul 1852, p 4. See also *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sat, 23 Oct 1852, p 3.
22. *Ibid*, Thurs, 9 Oct 1851, p 2. *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, Mon, 31 Oct 1853, p 329.
23. *New South Wales Statutes*, 15 Victoria, pp 186–191.
24. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Fri, 22 Oct 1852, p 2.
25. <http://heritage.aviva.com/our-history/countries/a/australia>.
26. John Woodland, *Money Pits: British Mining Companies in the Californian and Australian Gold Rushes of the 1850s* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Farnham, 2014, pp 5–6). As this book deals only with companies which attempted to raise money in London, it gives a slightly off-beam view of the Australian companies, but it is good on the generalities of the gold rush.
27. Voyage of three months – see below the voyage of the *Ellenborough*. Woodland, pp 152–154.
28. *Bathurst Free Press*, Sat, 22 Nov 1851, p 1, and other Nov and Dec dates that year, also *Empire*, and *Sydney Morning Herald* at this time. This Australian press material is all obtained from the National Library of Australia's excellent newspaper website <http://trove.nla.au>, which can be searched free of charge.

29. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 2 (Melbourne University Press, 1967). This list of his claims to fame does not mention his financial acumen. His wealth stood at £96,000 in Sydney and a further £70,000 in London at the time of his death in 1872 – say £11 million in today's money. As a member of the Legislative Council he was also instrumental in piloting through private Acts for various gold mining companies such as the Grand Nugget Vein Gold Mining Co for which, see below.

30. *Empire*, Tues, 20 Jan 1852, p 1.

31. *Empire* Sat 13 Mar 1852, p 1. 32. *Empire* Wed 1 Jun 1853, p 2.

33. *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, 20 Nov 1852, p 2e.

34. <http://www.aussietowns.com.au/town/lucknow-nsw>.

35. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wed, 3 Aug 1853, p 2. 36. Woodland, pp 162–168.

37. *Empire*, Wed, 1 Mar 1854, p 2.

38. Want, Randolph John, 1811–1869, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 6 (Melbourne University Press, 1976).

39. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wed, 30 Aug 1854, p 3. 40. *Ibid*, Tues, 26 Feb 1856, p 5.

41. *Ibid*, Mon, 27 Jan 1851, p 2; in the barque *Prince of Wales* 552 tons (Capt Stewart).

42. *Ibid*, Sat, 26 Apr 1851, p 4.

43. *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, Sat, 1 Nov 1851, p 311. I presume this is Nelson in the extreme W of the State of Victoria and not the Nelson on the N Coast of South Island, New Zealand.

44. 1871 census. The 1861 census does not help as the family were away leaving one servant in occupation of the house at 4 Princes Terrace, Hyde Park. 45. *Empire*, Sat, 3 Dec 1853, p 5.

46. Some companies required only part-payment of the share immediately, with an option to the company to demand the remainder later. Other companies such as Grand Nugget had already returned some of the equity to their shareholders.

47. Ms Lisa Hopkinson of the Bank of New South Wales tells me that in 1850 Witt bought some 115 shares and sold 45. What we do not have is details of his dealings in the Bank's shares after that year. 48. *Empire*, Sat, 19 Nov 1853, p 5. 49. Woodland, p 254.

50. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wed 14 Apr 1852, p 3. 51. *Ibid*, Wed, 2 Jun 1852, p 3.

52. *Ibid*, Fri 2 Dec 1853, p 3.

53. *Ibid*, Sat, 24 Aug 1850, p 2. It is a pity we are not told what the Witts' fancy dresses were.

54. *Empire*, Fri, 13 Jun 1851, pp 2–3.

55. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tues, 25 May 1852, p 2.

56. *Ibid*, Fri, 20 Dec 1850, p 3.

57. 1809–71, also a surgeon. He served on the New South Wales Legislative Council 1856–60 (article on his brother Thomas Turner àBeckett in Douglas Pike (Ed), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 3: 1851–90, A–C (Melbourne University Press, 1969)). This is the same Dr àBeckett as was involved in the Cameron case, above. 58. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wed, 8 Sep 1852, p 3.

59. *Ibid*, Fri, 13 May 1853, p 2. The Sydney Museum is the old name for the Australian Museum.

60. Wikipedia: Australian Museum.

61. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tues, 31 May 1853, p 2. The article is lengthy and includes the Report. 62. *Ibid*, Mon, 11 Jul 1853, p 2. 63. *Ibid*, Fri, 18 June 1852, p 2. Wikipedia: Taronga Zoo.

64. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tues, 9 May 1854, p 5. I suspect Witt had been collecting items for himself in Australia. The fossilised wood specimens might have been quite large and therefore not easy to ship back to England.

65. *Empire*, Mon, 2 Jan 1854, p 4. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mon, 2 Jan 1854, p 2. The *Ellenborough* was a large sailing ship. 66. *Empire*, loc cit.

67. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mon, 2 July 1854, p 5, quoting the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* of 10 Apl 1854.

68. This seems to be the *Augusta Schneider* mentioned in Woodland, p 196.

69. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mon, 10 July 1854, p 4, quoting the *London Morning Chronicle*. A picture of the *Ellenborough* is at the National Maritime Museum.

70. *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mon, 10 July 1854, p 4.

71. I am obliged to Ms Lisa Hopkinson of the Bank for this information.