



# North West Kent Family History Society

## Annual Report 2017

### Introduction

**Tony Codling, Chair**

I consider myself privileged to be Chairman of such a dynamic Society with a great executive team plus the three branch committees, library helpers and task holders that freely give their time and energy to make our Society one of the best. So a very big thanks you to all our volunteers.

Tunbridge Wells Family History Society made the sad decision to close, and NWKFHS was grateful for the donation of their assets. This has extended the area that we cover and have welcomed their members to join us.

Plans to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Society in 2018 were advanced. Success in this and all other aspects of our work has been the result of the hard work, passion for family history and willingness to help others contributed by hundreds of volunteers over the past four decades.

Between them, our branches in Bromley, Dartford and Sevenoaks organised a total of thirty-three meetings in 2017 with speakers on diverse and interesting subjects all provided free to all members. We ran over twenty workshops at the library on such subjects as organising your family history records, pre-1700 sources and the 1939 Register.

In addition we have several smaller groups that meet on a regular basis, a discussion group, two for writing skills and one on the computer programme *Family Historian*. We have several flourishing house groups and recently introduced one specifically on DNA.

The Society Library and Resource Centre, based in Joydens Wood, enjoyed attendance up by 10% on 2016 with a total of over 1500 visitors. Operated in conjunction with Kent County Council Libraries, but exclusively ours every Wednesday, we provide help and advice with research facilities for members. Our library room holds over 5,500 items related to genealogy and our area plus we provide computer access to various online family research services.

To keep members informed on events a quarterly Journal is posted to members, our three branches produce monthly newsletters, and twice monthly we email to over six hundred and sixty individuals via our emailinfoservice. This service is free and open to members and non-members. In addition we have various web based communications, including Blog, Twitter, Flickr and a thriving Facebook page and group.

Over the years, volunteers have transcribed dozens of parish registers, thereby making the data accessible to far-flung researchers and generating income for [www.nwkhfs.org.uk](http://www.nwkhfs.org.uk)

Registered charity 282627

the Society; over 250 CDs and DVDs have been created from these transcriptions and are available for sale.

We have showcased the Society and family history generally at several external events during 2017 with information leaflets and Society volunteers to answer questions and promote the Society.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> May we were honoured with the Mayor of the London Borough of Bexley Cllr Eileen Pallen who visited the Society's library and resource centre. She was able to see the Society in action as a beginners' workshop was in full swing, as well as a writing group, whilst other members were conducting their own research with the help of the library volunteers and resources. She was kind enough to say that she hoped North West Kent FHS would flourish and continue to add another dimension to the use of local libraries. The visit even got a mention in the local press which, we hope, has raised the awareness of our Society in the area and will encourage new members.

### **The Treasurer's report**

**Pat Gooding, Treasurer**

The Society has had another successful year. Unfortunately at the time of writing this report audited accounts were not available to confirm final results

Firstly, many thanks to Victor Nutt for his enthusiasm in running the workshops. The generous donations from those attending the workshops have helped the Society to keep in the black.

The EC committee asked that we try to tighten our belts and those doing the programmes for the three branches have kept well within the budgets they were given. My thanks go to them as well for the excellent job they are doing.

Also, the committee have asked that expenses are kept to a minimum which has also proved extremely helpful.

The Society has changed one of its bank accounts to Barclays from CAF bank. This is because CAF bank was charging the Society £60 a year in banking fees, Barclays do not charge.

For the second year running the venue for the AGM did not charge the Society for the hire of the premises which helped keep the cost of the AGM to a minimum. Which I hope those who attended enjoyed.

I would like to remind all members that the facility to pay subscriptions by standing order is available. Forms can be obtained at all three branches, at the library or by request to either the membership secretary (Christina Barnett) or myself.

If you are a UK tax payer then you can gift aid your subscription which enables the Society to claim 25p on every £1 for subscriptions and donations. If you do not already do so could I please ask that you consider doing so.

During 2016 we undertook a full review of current outstanding project work which highlighted the areas on which we should concentrate on during 2017. We produced five new publications plus another thirteen publications from Tunbridge Wells Family History Society in various forms which we converted to disc.

A considerable amount of time was also spent producing existing data to conform to current Data Protection rules. Because we have over 100 publications it was decided that we would produce amended discs at the time of sale particularly as these would need changing again next year as another year rolls on. Current rules mean that we cannot sell anything later than 100 years for birth/baptisms, 75 years for marriages and 25 years for deaths/burials.

We realised, with the earlier review, that our catalogue on the on-line bookshops of Genfair and Parish Chest were out-of-date. During 2017 these have been updated making a difference to our sales.

Our arrangement with the online data provider *Find My Past* has been successful over the years although income was very disappointing in 2016. With submissions in late 2016 and during 2017 we have sent over 55,000 entries and our revenue has picked up. We should be able to increase this in 2018. It is interesting to note, however, that FMP give a cut-off date of 84 years for marriages which has caused additional work.

We have a great deal of further data that needs to be processed and published ourselves which should come to fruition early 2018. We have a group of people who do a great deal of work in the preparation of publications and the Society thanks them for all their efforts. They include those who print images, transcribers, checkers and editors, without whom we could not function and for which we give our grateful thanks. We could do with a few more editors at this point in time.

### **Commonwealth War Graves Photographic Project**

The Commonwealth War Graves Photographic Project is now complete for Service war deaths for the whole area. There are only a few that we could not find which is a great achievement. It is our aim to publish the images and data ourselves in 2018 to coincide with the end of the commemorations along with other data gathered from other fields of conflict i.e. Boer War, Indian Mutiny etc.

As stated previously, we knew that completing the Civilian war deaths would be very challenging but we will include those we have found by the time we publish the Service deaths. The CWG does not record civilians from WWI although we have a note of some.

As I have said many times before, the involvement of so many volunteers and a dedicated few who feel it is their mission to find that *missing* grave is a credit to the Society and I cannot thank them enough for all their help and support.

Four issues of the Journal were published and circulated to members only. The March issue included the annual report of 2016. The December issue included membership renewal forms, a booking form for the Family History Day 2017 and a commemorative bookmark celebrating our 40th anniversary. Fellow trustees contribute these inserts, managing to keep to the printing deadlines to make sure your Journal arrives on time each quarter.

Because so many members contribute articles and news each Journal was well filled with interesting and varied articles, alongside Society information. More are always welcome. Many contributors continued to support the theme of the commemoration of World War I, a theme that will continue into 2018. The March issue included details of the Josephine Birchenough Memorial Awards 2016 which, again, reflected the high standards maintained by contributors.

Thanks are due to the team that produce the Journal: to all contributors who share their expertise and family stories; to David Turner, who ensures Journal images are the best we can obtain; Sheila Beckett, David Bonner, John Henderson and Victor Nutt who form the team of proof readers and, finally, Spindrift Printers, who print and circulate the Journal promptly.

During the year I handed over the Society's monthly electronic newsletter to Stella Eames. During the course of compiling 53 newsletters the number of subscribers grew from zero to over 660 and I am delighted to see it continues to reach out to many subscribers.

Journals were exchanged with 35 Family History Societies; these were available at branch meetings, latterly at Dartford and Sevenoaks. This number has reduced this year as more Societies are only offering digital copies, and will reduce slightly as we cease to exchange with some organisations, that have proved to be of little interest to members.

**The Library and Resource Centre****Janet Rose, Librarian**

The Library and Resource Centre has continued to help members and has recruited new members during the year. Helpers joined in the Kent Libraries Fun Day on August 3rd, giving many children the opportunity to sort out the Harry Potter family tree, invented by Brain Kirk.

Workshops and discussion groups have been held monthly, giving members an insight into a wide variety of topics and making them aware of the many facilities available at the library. Refreshments are available all day for a small donation.

The cataloguing group have performed a sterling task in entering every book, fiche, disk etc onto a database to give easy access to any requested item. This is ongoing due to the generous donations that arrive.

The project group meets twice a month and finished the St Albans Road School log book work that has now gone to *Find My Past* as have the registers and log book for Stone The Brent School. Ongoing projects include putting the WW1



We are sad to report the death of one of our audio helpers, John Muskett, who set up the audio equipment for many tears. A collection was taken at the December meeting and sent to the Kent Charity Headway in his memory.

## **Sevenoaks Branch**

## **Barbara Attwaters, Chair**

As usual I will start with my thanks to all the committee. They are a really good team who all work very hard behind the scenes to keep the branch running as smoothly as it does. We also have been fortunate to have four regular members who help clear the hall of tables at the end of every meeting. However, regrettably, we will lose two of them this year. If you attend Sevenoaks Meetings, are able-bodied and can spare ten minutes at the end of the evening I would be very pleased to see you.

**General** Thanks to the efforts of Christina Barnett our programme secretary, we have had some very good speakers in the past year, and the Programme for 2018-19 has a very varied selection of talks so there should be something of interest for everyone.

Sadly for the branch Christina has decided that now is the right time for her to stand down as our Programme Secretary. She has been in this post for many years and she thinks it is time for a change. We will miss her knowledge and expertise. However we have not lost her completely as both she and Bob will still be attending our branch meetings.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the members who bring food for the Christmas buffet. I am always amazed at the range and quantity that actually arrives on the night. This year at the request of our speaker we changed the buffet time to commence in the middle of the evening, instead of the start of the evening. It proved to be a very popular move and the feedback has been positive so we will see if we can do this again.

**Attendance** Attendance has been rather disappointing this year. I can discern no obvious reason for this continuing downward trend especially as most of the speakers have been very well known and liked. Hopefully as many of you as possible will try to bring a friend to our meetings this coming year. How about a gift membership for a friend? This works two ways, as the giver gets a companion to accompany them to the meetings and the receiver gets a year-long present. Gift membership forms are always available at the signing in desk.

**Raffle** This continues to be a great success and is a focal point and a little bit of fun at the end of the evening. All the members have been very generous in their giving and the total for our Christmas Raffle was £58.00. Our thanks to Barbara Stead who runs this so ably for us each month.

**The Hall** At the last Executive Committee meeting it was decided that all the branches should have fire marshals. Thankfully we have already had two volunteers come forward for the post.

The planning permission for the new hall has now gone through. However there are still some things under discussion mainly involving the Bat and Ball Station. It

is unlikely that any of this will have an effect on the community centre in the immediate future.

## **Publicity and Marketing Committee**

**Mike Weeks, Chair**

In 2017 we reformed the committee so as to include all aspects of publicity and marketing thus trying to find new ways to promote the Society in addition to continuing the talks and articles in local magazines. Attendance at a variety of events included having a stand in shopping malls and supermarkets, which we would like to do more of in 2018 especially in the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells areas where we have less representation. Each year I ask for knowledge from members as to how we can be more involved in their area and local societies but the response is usually nil. I would love to know why. Who will be the first to respond?

The bi-monthly email has been combined with the newsletter and thanks to Stella Eames has been greatly expanded. Similarly the Society is now much more active on Facebook covering a wide range of topics which has provoked more responses.

Sales of calendars have continued for the third year and this year we have added packs of notelets plus an anniversary bookmark which you received with your December journal.

2018 is the 40th anniversary of the Society and the ideal opportunity to show the area how successful we are and if you feel you can contribute to helping us spread the word please contact me.

## **Events**

**Barbara Attwaters, Co-ordinator**

Looking back over 2017 we had a very full year. The year began in March when we attended the Bexley Civic Society Event at Hall Place, which was well attended and we signed up some new members. We also had a visit from the Lady Mayor from L B Bexley who showed great interest in what we do. She later visited the Society library.

April, of course, was the Society AGM which was held at West Heath School Sevenoaks with 110 members attending including two members from Canada.

In May we attended the West Kent Garden show in Tonbridge. This was a first for us and it was ably manned by some of our Sevenoaks Branch volunteers.

Later in the month David Turner and Ellen Shelly manned a table at the Sedley School Annual Fete in Southfleet. They had a very good day, engaging with lots of people and giving out our information packs. This may have been because they were next to the cake stall!

In June we attended the New Ash Green Library Drop in Session. Always nice venues to attend with a couple of the visitors were already members but cannot get to the Society Library

In July we were at the St Mary Cray Village Fete. Another event that is enjoyable and a good number of our own members turn up to support the day.

Also in July for the first time we were invited to attend the Fleetdown Library community day. Not knowing what to expect five members of the team and Janet Rose turned up on the morning to find a degree of *organised chaos* as so many parents and children had all come to do something. Fortunately we had taken our Harry Potter Family Tree game and the sorting hat which proved to be amazingly popular with both parents and the children. Once Janet took charge of the children the rest of us could have a proper conversation with the adults, helping them to look things up and handing out the information packs.

In August in conjunction with KCC Libraries we held a follow-on drop-in day at Joydens Wood. It was very rewarding to see some of the adults we had spoken to previously. The total attendance at Joydens Wood on this day was 77.

September October and November found most of the usual events team at The Orchard Centre, Dartford, where we have negotiated use of the community space free of charge on market days. We have used this as a showcase for the Society giving out goodie bags and flyers. I believe this has increased local public awareness of the Society and what we do.

In October we were at the Bexley Local Studies Drop-In. This is always popular both with the public and members and this one was no exception. There was a letter of thanks to the group after the event.

In November Stella Eames and a group of volunteers, mainly from Bromley Branch, set up a stand in the Foyer at Tesco's Orpington. They were completely run off their feet almost all day. Everyone involved agreed that it was a very worthwhile experience and we are considering running similar events at other supermarkets in our area.

If, after reading this report, you think you would like to be involved helping to promote the Society at events and drop in sessions please contact Barbara Attwaters at [events@nwkfhs.org.uk](mailto:events@nwkfhs.org.uk)

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