



North West Kent Family History Society

Annual Report of the Trustees 2019

Tony Codling Chairman

What a year 2019 has been. Where did it go? Seems time has speeded up or is it just me?

Our president David Cufley and I attended the Federation of Family History Society general meeting held at Royal Engineers Museum, Gillingham, on Saturday 16th March 2019. The new federation's website was demonstrated showing how each Society in the federation has a web page to promote themselves and publish events. To appeal to the wider history community the Federation is using the name of "Family History Federation" on promotional and marketing literature.

The Family History Day and AGM on 11th April, at, Cobham Hall, was well attended and a great success with Dr Nick Barratt giving a talk on *The Real Story of the Magna Carta* and Delia Taylor an entertaining talk with music on *The Roaring Twenties*.

We were represented at the Family Tree Live show at Alexandra Palace in London on 26th and 27th April. The show is sponsored by Family Tree magazine in partnership with the Federation of Family History Societies, and suitable for all family researchers. We considered the show a great success with many visitors to our stall so we will again be attending this year's show which runs from Friday 17th to Saturday, 18th April 2020. Come along, you will find it well worthwhile.

The Society web-site, is working well enabling members to renew membership, make a donation, order discs, keep up-to-day with events and the Society providing useful information in the Members-Only Area.

Along with most similar organisations, we lose on average 10% of members each year, but our membership numbers have remained fairly constant. But, to ensure we remain viable, it is vitally important for all of us to keep promoting the Society and encourage others to join. The *Bring a friend* initiative introduced a couple of years ago worked well so please continue to tell your friends about the society.

Our Treasurer **Pat Gooding** confirmed another successful year financially balancing income against costs and making ends meet without having to dip into reserves. Helped by your support and generous donations in 2019 and not forgetting the taxman as we have been able to claim over £2100 in Gift Aid.

At the yearend members had raised nearly £100 for the Society by buying items; they normally buy on the internet using <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/nwkfhs> Please register and help raise much needed donations for your Society it will not cost you a penny.

Members that attend House Groups say how enjoyable it is to meet in a small group and chat with other members to resolve research issues. So why not form your own group for help and advice email Maureen Griffiths on housegroups@nwkfhs.org.uk

For the fourth year running we had a great response to the photo competition for the 2019 Society calendar and, due to the generous donations towards the printing costs by some of our members, we were able to hold the price at only £2. It was a first in that all the calendars were sold before Christmas so a big thank you to those that purchased calendars.

In June I welcomed our new Society secretary Jim Murchie, to the executive committee, Jim has certainly hit the ground running by reviewing and updating our policy handbook and formalising our Health & Safety and Risk Analysis procedures which I would add is not an insignificant task.

To maintain our success we need new volunteers to take on very important roles within the Society.

We need a Branch Chair and Programme Organiser at Bromley as these are very important roles to maintain the viability of the Bromley Branch. A Programme Organiser is also required at our Sevenoaks Branch.

In addition we also need someone to take on the role of Events Coordinator for external events and shows to promote the Society to a wider audience.

If you would like to know more of what is involved please ask me for a copy of the job description. Although this details the tasks involved it can be configured around the individual. It is recognised that volunteering is a hobby and must be something you enjoy doing.

March 2020 also marks a new development. Following my request in the December journal a number of members have agreed to stop receiving a hard copy and instead will log into the members-only area (MOA) of our web-site and download an electronic copy. This additional service to members will help the Society offset increased costs and save a few natural resources. But there is no intention of only offering an electronic journal and we will, of course, continue to print and post to those members that prefer it a hard copy each quarter.

Sadly each year we hear of members that have died and on behalf of the society would like to extend our sincere condolences to their families and friends.

I hope you agree that 2019 is considered a successful year for the Society. It is due to the exceptional volunteers, task-holders, branch committee members, trustees, our President and Vice Presidents who give their free time generously and are dedicated to maintaining the success of this Society.

As Chairman I would like to thank them all for making my role that much easier.

Treasurer's Report

Patricia Gooding Treasurer

At the time of writing this report it is not the end of the financial year, however, it looks as if the Society has had another successful year. I am estimating that when the rest of the invoices are received by December 31st the Society will be in the black.

To ensure we are able to get the best experienced speakers for the Branch talks we have increased the Branch budgets for speakers. Gift aid plays a huge part in the finances of the Society so if you are a UK taxpayer and do not Gift Aid your subscription could I please ask that you do so. This adds a further £2.50 for every single membership and £3 for every family membership.

The Society committee have again agreed to keep the membership cost at £10 for a single individual and £12 for a family membership. As a Society we consider this is extremely good value as this has been held since 2005. If you would like to make a further donation to the Society and you pay by standing order, you can increase your yearly subscription accordingly, through your bank. In addition you can renew your membership and make a donation via our web-site shop. Could I please ask that those who pay by cheque or cash to consider paying by standing order as this would simplify our administration.

Publicity report

Mike Weeks vice Chair & Publicity

The team **Stella Eames, Fran Rogers, Victor Nutt** and **Judith French** have continued to work hard in their respective areas, with talks, workshops and discussion groups all flourishing. At this point I would like to thank Victor Nutt for his sterling work in his expansion of the workshop programme and welcome Pam Goddard as his successor.

Rootstech London was held in October and Stella Eames was on hand as a Rootstech Ambassador as well as when the opportunity arose promoted our Society. Judith French enthusiastically joined the publicity team and has fresh ideas for promoting the society.

Tony, our Chair, did have contact with a local library group in Tunbridge Wells and it is hoped to broaden both our involvement in that area and set up groups in other parts of our area. So any member who can help please let me know by email publicity@nwkfhs.org.uk

The team is also anxious to learn of any local magazines, newssheets etc where we can promote the Society as well as hearing from members who belong to any organisation in our area that might be willing to put up a poster on our behalf.

Circulation of the twice monthly eNewsletter has now reached 822 subscribers; the Facebook page has 667 followers with Facebook Group page having 390 members. Check out our *flickr* page which has 3402 historical images of interest to family researchers.

Secretary's Report

Jim Murchie Society Secretary

I took over the role of Secretary in June 2019 and very quickly gained an appreciation of the tremendous work our 100 plus volunteers do in maintaining the NWKFHS as one of the leading Family History Societies in the UK. A real gang of unsung heroes! Please remember that additional volunteers are always most welcome.

At the last AGM a number of amendments to the Constitution were agreed and have subsequently been ratified by the Charity Commission. The revised document can be found on the Society web-site.

The NWKFHS Handbook, which sets out the basic rules for the management of the Society, is currently being reviewed, updated and seven new sections added which relate to:

- General Data protection Regulations 2018
- President and Vice-Presidents
- Library
- Journal
- Publications and Projects Sub-Committee
- Health and Safety
- Risk Analysis

At the time of writing, this work is well under way and the aim is to finalise the revised document prior to the AGM.

I am extremely surprised at the low utilisation of the Society's web-site which contains a wealth of information on the Society, plus extremely useful information to assist family history research and an excellent shop. Recent figures show that out of a total membership of 1101, 990 members are listed on the web-site, but only 306 (28%) have signed into the Members-Only Area (MOA).

I strongly recommend that all members at least sign in to the MOA to review the information available.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Stella Eames for a most efficient handover of Secretarial duties and to the Executive Committee for their help and support during my learning curve.

Editor's Report

Pauline Heathcote Editor

Four issues of The Journal were published and circulated to members only. As the year progressed an electronic version of the Journal was introduced to the members-only area of the Society web-site. In the September issue, members were invited to reduce their environmental footprint by electing to read The Journal on-line and no longer receive paper copy. By the end of the year a growing number of members were choosing this option.

Increasingly colour images were used on the cover pages, a practice that demands a regular supply of images from members.

Because so many members contribute articles and news, each Journal was well-filled with interesting and varied articles, alongside Society information. More contributions are always welcome. The March issue included details of the Josephine Birchenough Memorial Awards 2018 which, again, reflected the high standards maintained by contributors. The March 2019 issue also included a summary of the annual report of 2018 with the annual programme 2019-2020. The December 2019 issue included membership renewal forms and a booking form for the Family History Day 2019.

Thanks are due to the team that help produce the Journal: to all contributors who share their expertise and family stories and to David Turner, who ensures Journal images are the best we can obtain. The team of proof readers, Sheila Beckett, David Bonner, Pauline Langley and Victor Nutt worked hard to meet deadlines and to maintain our standards. Spindrift Printers print and distribute the Journal promptly and also deserve our thanks.

Journals were exchanged with 24 Family History Societies; these were available at Dartford and Sevenoaks Branch meetings. The number of exchanges has reduced this year as more Societies are only offering digital copies. Six copies are sent to legal deposit libraries and eight libraries pay for copies of the Journal.

Projects & Publications Report

Barbara Phillips Chair: Publications, Publicity & Projects

2019 has been yet another busy and successful year. We have completed a great deal of outstanding work as well as tackling many new projects plus many in the pipeline.

We have produced 19 new discs and as mentioned last year, the earlier 2015 Data Protection Act still means that we have to amend publications year by year until the dates comply and there are still many years to go.

Our on-line Sales with Genfair and Parish Chest continue to give us a small income (just over £300). Parish Chest stopped trading for a short while due to problems with their web-site but it has been taken over by the Federation and should be viable in the New Year.

Sales have been far exceeded by orders to our own web-site e-shop (over £1300) an increase on those in 2018.

Our arrangement with the on-line Data Provider 'Find My Past' has been much more successful this year and will generate approximately £1200 during 2019. Some 40,000 entries were submitted to FMP during 2019 and the newest should appear on-line in January 2020 which will boost our income during the year. There is also additional data in the pipeline which will be submitted in the Spring.

We still have a great deal of data that needs to be processed and published and acknowledge the volunteers that do a great deal of work in the preparation of publications. They include those who print images, transcribers, checkers and editors, without whom we could not function and for which we give our grateful thanks. As I have said many times before, the involvement of so many volunteers is a credit to the Society and I cannot thank them enough for all their help and support. Without them, we could not flourish as we do.

Library Committee Report

Janet Rose Librarian

2019 has been another good year at the library with an increased foot fall of over 1650 which has helped justify the retention of the library by KCC.

The workshops, organised by Victor Nutt are very popular and well attended and although now stepping down has helped his replacement, Pam Goddard, organise 32 workshops for 2020.

In addition two writing groups, a computer group and a group transcribing a variety of old diaries and school records also meet regularly at the library.

Research requests have been successfully handled by Lorraine King and David Turner.

In July we provided refreshments and research support which helped the KCC library open day initiative and the day was considered by KCC a great success.

Many new books have been donated necessitating the purchase of two more bookcases. The total book collection now stands at over 5700. A big thank you to David Cufley who organises the cataloguing prepares agendas and minutes and many other things.

If you haven't visited the library why not make a trip in 2020? Everyone welcome, light refreshments available and advice freely given.

The library window display team have been very creative and have attracted interest from the public which has resulted in new members, so a big thanks to everyone who helped to make the library /research centre a success.

Bromley Branch Report

Isabel Leslie Branch Chair

The Branch attended a number of events and visits during the year and assisted at both national and local Fairs. We attended The Crystal Palace Overground Festival and the Hayes Fair in June. The Hayes Fair was the most memorable, as we experienced rain, hail and gale force winds!

Our annual summer lunch was well attended at The Bromley Court Hotel and we are looking forward to our winter lunch which is to be held in February 2020, again at the Bromley Court.

The Shortlands House Group is going from strength to strength and in 2019 organised away day trips to the Metropolitan Archives and The Guildhall complex which included a visit to the City of London Police Museum and further outings are being organised. In our June newsletter we first highlighted the pressing need for volunteers to assist in the running of the Bromley Committee and fill the various task holder duties.

In July we first advised that Lynne, our Programme Organiser, would stand down at the 2020 Branch Annual Meeting in March. The post has been widely advertised but so far no one has come forward to take on this essential role. The lack of task holders and Committee members is now giving us cause for concern.

Dartford Branch Report

Janet Rose Branch Chair

The attendance at the Dartford Branch continues to average 100 at each meeting. Thanks to Barbara Phillips, the speakers at our meetings have been interesting and varied. Our newsletter "The Dartboard" compiled by Hilary Waters has supplied useful information and helpful advice. Hilary has also organised trips which were enjoyed by members. Thanks to Hilary also for her effort and enthusiasm for taking on the job of exchange journals when Stella Nichols moved away, as well as looking after the Branch library bookstall. There are many people who have stalls at our meetings and I would like to thank them especially

Sandra & Bob Shephard whose refreshments keep us going and Sheila Elisak, our Branch secretary, who makes our bookings does minutes and generally keeps me up to speed.

The Branch Committee ensure that meetings go smoothly and Maureen Griffiths does an amazing job of sorting out the Branch finances as well as taking renewal memberships.

The annual Christmas lunch was enjoyed by the 46 members that attended. Thanks go to Sylvia Hammond for getting the soft drinks and helped by Barbara Attwaters sorting out the seating plan. The Christmas raffle raised over £130 and about 30 people won prizes. Thank you all who donated items or bought tickets. We hope 2020 will be just as successful.

Sevenoaks Branch Report

Barbara Attwaters Branch Chair

I will start with my heartfelt thanks to all the committee. They are an excellent team who work very hard behind the scenes to keep the Branch running smoothly.

We also have some members who regularly help clear the hall of tables at the end of every meeting and my thanks are extended to them as always.

However since our move to the magnificent new quarters in Otford we really need help before the meeting to set out some of the tables and chairs so if you if you are able bodied and can spare ten minutes at the beginning or end of the evening we would be very pleased to see you.

Since moving to the Otford Hall in May 2019 the attendance has been growing steadily.

We have to date taken five new memberships and have noticed some of our past members have been returning and bringing a friend in some cases. This is because the new venue is easier to get to and within walking distance for some. This trend is very gratifying and I hope that it will continue.

The raffle remains a great success thanks to the generosity of members and to Barbara Stead who makes sure the table looks interesting every month. We will be very sorry to lose Barbara who has worked very hard to make the Raffle a success but is not able to continue so we are looking for a volunteer to replace her.

The Branch Committee are proud of our Branch and the work we do for the Society but it cannot manage without a full committee. At present we are in need of a Programme Organiser and one other. If anyone wishes to join the committee could they please contact me at sevenoaks@nwkfhs.org.uk

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