



North West Kent Family History Society

Annual Report of the Trustees 2020

Tony Codling Chairman

What a year 2020 has been. I don't know where it has gone but I for one am jolly glad it has, let us all hope for a better 2021.

David Cufley as NWKFHS representative attended the virtual general meeting of the Family History Federation on Saturday 30th May as the original date of the 14th March 2020 was cancelled due to the coronavirus.

The Family History Federation organised a virtual show called **The Really Useful Show** in November. The society had a virtual stall which was manned by volunteers from 10 am till 4 pm and as a first was considered a success with new members joining and sales of parish discs, and as a result we have already agreed to attend the next show in April 2021.

The Federation also plan to produce a series of podcasts freely available on the FHF website and also on www.spotify.com. Aimed at providing information on various family history research topics and will cover a wide range of themes

We have introduced **Zoom video meetings** for workshops, discussion & writing groups and have arranged free talks by professional speakers. We usually employ them at branch meetings have now asked them to give their talks via Zoom. See the events calendar on the website for details of meetings and talks.

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

We have added several new features in the MOA and now members can watch recorded Zoom workshops in addition to download research aid diagrams & charts search and view all volumes of ours and Tunbridge Wells Journals, also search surnames, places and subject interests plus several other datasets. Please login to the website to gain the full benefits of being a member.

Although we can't hold branch meeting we still need new members so don't forget **"The Bring-Tell a friend Initiative"** introduced a couple of years ago worked well so please continue to tell your friends about the society.

Although our income has dropped significantly this year, for obvious reasons, our Treasurer **Pat Gooding** is hoping we can balance the books. So your donations however small are more important than ever during these difficult times.

Help us when buying items on the internet by joining the NWKFHS page on www.easyfundraising.org.uk Please register and help raise much needed donations for your Society it will not cost you a penny.

You can also help to reduce our running cost by agreeing to download the quarterly journal instead of receiving the hard copy through the post I can confirm we have 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.

Several of our House Groups are continuing to communicate by Zoom. So why not form your own group for help and advice email Maureen Griffiths on housegroups@nwkfhs.org.uk

For the fifth year running we had a great response to the photo competition for the 2021 Society calendar and, due to the generous donations towards the printing costs by some of our members and changing the size to enable us to include second class postage in the price we were able to limit the price to just £2.50

Once again I have to appeal for 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.

Please ask me for a copy of the job descriptions by emailing chairman@nwkfhs.org.uk

Although these details the tasks involved the role can be configured around the individual.

We fully recognised that volunteering is a hobby and must be something you enjoy doing.

I hope you agree that 2020 in spite of the Coronavirus lockdown we have managed to continue to provide a useful service and my thanks go to the exceptional team of volunteers who give their free time generously and are dedicated to maintaining the success of this Society.

Treasurer's Report

Patricia Gooding Treasurer

At the time of writing this report it is not the end of the financial year so unable to give detailed results. Income has been reduced due to the closure of the library and not being able to hold branch meetings however on the plus side our outgoings have also been reduced. However coupled with some generous donations from members it is anticipated that we might even be able to have a small surplus.

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.

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.

Due to the continuing pandemic it is difficult to pay in cheques at the bank, so it would be most helpful if subscriptions were paid by standing order or directly into the bank account using their name and membership number in the reference.

Secretary's Report

Jim Murchie Society Secretary

Corvid-19 has made 2020 a somewhat challenging year – the shutting of the KCC library at Joydens Wood and the consequent lack of access to our library / documentation, the cancellation of all face to face meetings and workshops and the cancellation of the AGM. Added to this are difficulties being experienced in finding replacements for key office holders who are now retiring.

However – the “Dunkirk Spirit” is evidently alive and well in NWKFHS. Zoom has been mastered and is now used to host meetings and workshops, an online AGM was held, the website has undergone a significant update, the Publications and Projects Group have once again contributed magnificently to the Society's funds, membership levels have been maintained and the comfortable financial position continued.

My hearty congratulations to all concerned.

Until this wretched virus has been brought under control the format, date and venue of the 2021 AGM cannot be finalised. Sufficient notice will be given to ensure that members may submit Motions for the AGM eight weeks before the meeting as required by Clause 8.1.5 of the Constitution.

The number of members who participated in the 2020 AGM vote for the Executive Committee Officers was 78 out of a membership of 1029. It would be nice to think that there will be an increased participation in 2021.

The situation regarding finding replacements for retiring Executive Committee members and Branch Officers is now critical, particularly at the Bromley Branch where the positions of Chair and a Programme Organiser are now vacant. Help is most urgently required.

Publicity report

Mike Weeks vice Chair & Publicity

Due to the pandemic there have been no formal meetings of the sub-committee this year.

Stella Eames has continued to publish the bi-monthly email newsletter full of interesting facts and information relating to our area.

In November members of the committee plus others did take part in a virtual fair organised by the Federation which proved very popular and resulted in both CD sales and memberships for the Society so for the time being this is the way forward.

In the absence of branch meetings I decided to contact all new members who joined in 2020 so that they would feel connected to the Society although they could not meet up and these numbers have now exceeded 100 due in no small part to our superb website

The responses I have received have all been very positive but the interesting fact is that many of these new members live way beyond the Society's boundaries (as far afield as Scotland plus all corners of England not to forget those from overseas). This interaction has raised a conundrum for when we do all meet up again as to how we maintain engagement with all members not just those who can attend local meetings.

Editor's Report

Pauline Heathcote Editor

Four issues of The Journal were published and circulated to members-only. As the year progressed more members were using the electronic version of the Journal on the Society website and growing number of members have elected to read The Journal on-line only and not to receive paper copy.

Increasingly colour images were used on the cover pages, a practice that demanded a regular supply of images from members. Many members contributed items and news making each Journal well-filled with interesting and varied articles, alongside Society information. More contributions will always be welcome.

The June issue included details of the Josephine Birchenough Memorial Awards 2020 which, again, reflected the high standards maintained by contributors. Members of the NWKFHS writing workshop group featured strongly too, responding to your family myths and tall tales. This proved to be a novel way to explore the lives of ancestors. The same issue also included a summary of the annual report of 2019 with the annual programme 2019-2020.

Covid restrictions (March -December) in the intervening months gave many members time to contribute articles to the June and September issues.

The December 2020 issue included membership renewal forms and set members the challenge of helping the Editor ensure we maintain our publication standard.

Thanks are due to the team that produced the Journal: to all contributors who shared their expertise and family stories and to David Turner, who ensured 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.

Apart from offering members the opportunity to elect to read the Journal online, we successfully concluded our quest to find a printer able to distribute using a paper envelope. Since June, the journal has been successfully printed and circulated by Joshua Horgan Print and Design.

Journals were exchanged with 17 Family History Societies; these are normally available at Dartford branch meetings and, circumstances permitting, Sevenoaks branch. Legal deposits were made to copyright libraries and, to promote the society, six copies per quarter, were sent to local archive centres

Projects & Publications Report

Barbara Phillips Chair: Publications, Publicity & Projects

This unprecedented year has been yet another busy and successful year, although with additional problems. With the onset of various lockdowns our team of volunteers have required more work to occupy them and all this by post.

This starts with the printing of images. I have to specially thank Judith French and Bridget & Ian West for their input. Between them they have printed hundreds of images. I, too, have done the same and between us we have been able to keep everyone busy during the whole year! Consequently we have not been able to produce as many new discs as we normally do although we have managed to produce 6. We now have a huge backlog of work to be processed, mainly by me, which hopefully I will be able to tackle during 2021.

As mentioned previously the 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 in many instances.

Our online Sales with Genfair and Parish Chest continue to give us an annual income (just over £500). Parish Chest stopped trading for a short while due to problems with their website but it has been taken over by the Federation and became viable once more during this year. Sales have been far exceeded by orders to our own website e-shop (over £1800) which has exceeded those in 2019.

Our arrangement with the online Data Provider 'Find My Past' has been successful again this year and will generate approximately £1400 during 2020. Some 25,000 entries were submitted to FMP during 2020. Again, further submissions will follow the publication of new work during 2021.

We still have a great deal of further data that needs to be processed and published. 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.

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

The first three months of the year at our Summerhouse Drive Library and Resource Center were busy. Workshops were fully booked and the KCC computers were occupied continually.

The transcribing group met on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the first three month transcribing a school register, log book and diaries of a Dartford Resident Fred Foot. These were all taken home and completed during the lockdown.

New items being transcribed at home are ledgers from Dartford Funeral directors Mackney & Sons from 1909 to 1922. An amazing source of local history for Family Historians.

Bromley Branch Report

Lynne Overton on behalf of Bromley Branch Committee

At the first meeting of the year, we welcomed Sharon Hintze, who gave an informative and well received talk on new developments on the Family Search website. Russell Bowes, a gardening historian, gave February's talk, "Dig For Victory", a hugely entertaining talk about Britain's efforts to feed the nation during World War Two, full of anecdote and quirky facts.

The Branch Winter Lunch, held in February at the Bromley Court Hotel, was a great success, with over 20 members attending. Our thanks go to Janet Akehurst for organising the event.

Once we became aware that all meetings would be put on hold for the duration, Lynne Overton and Isabel Leslie decided to continue the Shortlands House Group meetings via e-mail on a weekly basis.

We managed this successfully for ten weeks until lockdown was lifted. Numbers did fluctuate from week to week, especially when the weather was fine! Whilst still in lockdown, Bromley Branch completed the transcription of the Cudham Marriage Registers 1837 to 1900, and co-ordinator, Peter Crawley, was able to pass them on to Barbara Phillips.

Lynne Overton decided to stand down as Programme Organiser, and agreed to mentor any volunteer who decided to take on the role. As yet, no one has come forward. Isabel Leslie, our chair, took the decision to stand down from the Bromley Committee and her role as Chair from December 2020 for personal reasons. She has also reluctantly decided that she can no longer host the Shortlands House Group.

Our thanks go to Isabel and Sandy, her husband, who always made us all very welcome. Indeed, may Bromley Branch take this opportunity to thank Isabel for all she has done to promote our Branch, support our committee, and ensure that the Branch continues.

However, in order to thrive, we should add that we urgently need volunteers to come forward to join the committee and take up the vacant roles, currently Chair, Programme Organiser and Branch Representative. Lynne Overton on behalf of the Bromley Committee

Dartford Branch Report

Janet Rose Branch Chair

The three Dartford meetings held in January, February and March were well attended and the talks were varied. In January Alison Elman-Brown talk was on buttons and she displayed an amazingly large selection of buttons showing different types and sources.

Our February meeting took us on a visual tour of South London cemeteries, pointing out the graves of well known people.

At our March meeting Dr Lepine gave an illustrated talk about the history of Dartford Grammar School for Boys which is of local interest to many who they or their sons / grandsons attended the school.

The Dartford branch committee has kept in touch during the lockdown and in July when restriction were lifted were able to meet up in my garden for a Strawberry tea

Sevenoaks Branch Report

Barbara Attwaters Branch Chair

What a strange year it has been for everyone.

After the uncertainty and disruption at the start of 2019 we happily managed to find suitable accommodation in the Oxford Memorial Hall. This was found to be very suitable so we tried to book it for the foreseeable future although it was not actually available for our February and March meetings at the start of this year. These two meetings were held in the nearby Methodist Church which was smaller than we would have liked but in fact attendance was low so we managed.

This meeting, in March, was the last we were able to hold this year!

Attendance Despite the hiccup at the start of the year I am hopeful that once we get back in the Memorial Hall things will improve and in anticipation of this long awaited day I am convening a Zoom meeting with existing committee members to discuss the way forward.

The Branch Committee We are proud of our branch and the work we do for the society but it is a struggle without a full committee. At present we are in need of a programme secretary and one other. If anyone wishes to join the committee could they please email me at sevenoaks@nwkfhs.org.uk

Website Update

www.nwkfhs.org.uk

Website team

The website team consists of David Cufley & Tony Codling.

The pandemic has energised the team to look for ways to communicate with our members and the use of Zoom video conferencing has been a major achievement in extending our services.

Two licenses were purchased to allow longer Zoom meetings and make it possible to produce online workshops, discussion groups and external speakers to give talks that were previously held at branch meetings.

In addition we have been able to communicate directly with out of area and overseas members with members linking up from Norfolk, Yorkshire, Scotland, Canada and Melbourne-Australia.

These zoom meetings are now a permanent feature as they provides a great new benefit to all of our members, so if you are one of our out of area members please come and join the fun.

The workshops organised by Pam Goddard are recorded and available to view on the MOA of the website for those members unable to attend when the meetings are broadcast.

As a charity our objectives are to promote and encourage education in the study of family history and genealogy. We have amongst our members some expert family and local historians plus an extensive archive. So our website is an excellent way to make available the knowledge either in text, as articles, guides, advice sheets, or as video zoom presentations.

Please login and see what you can find to help with your family research.

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