

North West Kent Family History Society

Annual Committee Report 2016/7

Committee

Tony Codling, Chair

I would like to thank all who have put so much effort into the successful running of the Society during 2016. The Society Committee meets regularly to ensure the smooth running of the Society, that it is managed effectively and continues to be represented at fairs and at meetings of the Federation of Family History Societies. Many members contribute to the smooth running of the Society, arranging our successful programme of speakers and workshops, plan meetings, representing the Society at local events and keep the library, research and transcription service running. The Society continues to provide excellent value for money for the annual subscription – currently £10. Benefits include meetings with expert speakers, a 48 page quality journal, emailinfoservice, workshops, and a library of valuable documents and books which is open to members on Wednesdays. So what else can we do to attract and keep members? How can we attract more volunteers?

It is sad to report that Tunbridge Wells FHS closed on 31st December 2016, due to lack of members and volunteers to run the Society. We have made agreements with their committee to incorporate TWFHS into our Society from 1st January 2017. Each member of TWFHS has been invited to join NWKFHS. The circumstances that faced TWFHS just go to emphasise the importance of everyone promoting our Society at every opportunity to recruit new members and ensure our long term survival. Perhaps you can bring a friend to your local branch meetings.

The new website took considerably longer than anticipated, due to the lack of a volunteer coming forward to act as webmaster last year. This has resulted in us having to pay for website support. We hope you like the new website and the many added features such as the shop and ability to renew your membership online.

The success of the two previous photographic competitions and calendars convinced us that we should do it again this year so cameras at the ready and let us have some more fabulous entries of interesting parts of North West Kent area.

A matter has arisen regarding Projects that requires us to seek legal advice and as this is an ongoing matter full details will be given at a later date.

Our Society began in 1978 – which makes 2018 our fortieth anniversary year. If you would like to volunteer to help the Society in any way over the next few years please contact me Chair@nwkfhs.org.uk

Treasurer's Report

Patricia Gooding, Treasurer

It has been another successful year for the Society. Although we will be in the red again this year it is not as much as last year due to the committee looking very closely at expenditure. Fortunately our reserves are sufficient to satisfy the Charity Commission requirements and can easily cover a slight overspend but we continue to exercise due diligence and aim to live within our means. The Society's subscriptions have remained the same and our on-going recruitment will hopefully

bring in new members and more than cover the annual loss of members whilst maintaining our annual income level. Also we have a new web site which half of the cost came out of this year's funds. Once again can I ask all those who are UK taxpayers to fill in a Gift Aid form as this makes a big difference to the Society's income.

Secretary

Stella Eames, Secretary

I've been the Society's Secretary since April and over the past months I have witnessed and admired how much is done, often behind the scenes, to keep the society thriving.

A big thank you to all those members who may not have specific job titles but who arrange our successful programme of speakers and workshops, plan meetings, represent the Society at local events and keep the library, research and transcription service running. Perhaps some of the benefits of being a NWKFHS member should be called 'notontheinternet.com'.

What have been the best bits for me? I love research and problem-solving and enjoy helping fellow researchers far and near with our addictive pastime, and seeing their pleasure when brick walls are broken down or climbed over. Making lots of new friends and contacts both locally and from other parts of the UK and as far away as Australia.

However, whilst NWKFHS certainly punches above its weight, our membership numbers are reducing:

End 2013: 1,371; end 2014: 1,270; end 2015: 1,189; at 5 Dec 2016: 1,149;

We all know some reasons why – the internet probably being the main one - but I consider that the Society provides excellent value for money for the annual £10 subscription. Our 48 page quality journal, emailinfoservice, workshops, meetings, speakers and an archive of valuable documents and books which is open to members on Wednesdays. So what else can we do to attract and keep members? We do not want to be like other once-thriving brands such as Polaroid, Kodak and Blockbuster which all failed to adapt to market-changing conditions and no longer exist.

One member has come forward recently with brain-storming ideas to be considered further to increase the appeal of the Society. But, also, only one member has responded to me as a result of the request for feedback on our finances in Dec 2016 Journal page 142/3.

Finally, I hope to see as many as possible of you at our AGM and Family History Day on 22 April 2017.

Publications and Projects

Barbara Phillips, Coordinator

During 2016 we undertook a full review of current outstanding project work which took a considerable amount of time. Transcript status sheets have been updated or made for each project showing what data is available and to what stage each has reached. This was in part to identify data that needed publishing and/or submitted to Find My Past. This resulted in a number of new discs being published and approximately 50,000 entries submitted to FMP. Notably the revision of CD64 Westerham PRs has been produced after reworking and adding additional data. Now CD64v2 price £13 although the price of outstanding orders was honoured at £8. This disc contains data donated by Lionel Cole (16th to 18th centuries) and Margaret Oakley (19th to 20th centuries) for which the Society thanks them. Due to Data

Protection, those for the period 1919-1940 will not be on general release but a full version is available at the Society's Library where it may be viewed but not copied or sold. The original Westerham data was 7,700 and has been increased to almost 26,000.

As in previous years, sales of discs produced by the Society have dropped further, despite the on-line bookshops of Genfair and Parish Chest and our own postal ordering service. The tendency of researchers using online data sources is certainly the way ahead and it is important that we get our data online through FMP. Our arrangement with the online Data Provider 'Find My Past' has been successful over the years. However, sales via this source have been unpredictable but it has provided the Society with a small income during 2016 particularly as we have only recently been able to increase the amount of new data placed but hope to improve the situation during 2017.

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. However we have a huge amount of work that needs doing and to cope with this workload we still need more volunteers. We need to get out more publications and also put more data on the FMP website. A workshop at the Society's library at Joyden's Wood in June 2017 entitled *Your Society Needs You – Transcribing, Checking and Editing of Society's publications and is designed for members who are interested in helping. It will explain the various stages project work goes through and the variety of help needed - not all of it requires the use of a computer.* Any Member who would like to help with this important task please contact me at projects@nwkfhs.org.uk

Commonwealth War Graves Photographic Project

Barbara Phillips

The Commonwealth War Graves Photographic Project continues. 'Service' war deaths in the Sevenoaks, Dartford and now Bromley areas have all been accomplished with the recent addition of Beckenham Cemetery, one of the largest cemeteries in the UK. A full report will become available during 2017.

As stated previously, we knew that completing the 'Civilian' war deaths would be very challenging. The Dartford area has been started but this has proved extremely difficult to fulfil in that the death is recorded by the notifying borough but bears no relation to where the person was actually buried. As we have copies of municipal cemetery burial records we are able to ascertain if a person is in a particular cemetery but it is detective work thereafter! Although we know many of those buried, there are often no markers, perhaps through age or the fact that they were buried by the local council. However, names do appear on commemorations. We are unable to undertake this for Sevenoaks area as we do not have similar records available and the Sevenoaks area is, to a large extent, a rural area and burial grounds are widespread. A similar situation exists for the Bromley area in that we do not hold copies of municipal cemetery burial records. However, many graves have been located whilst looking for service deaths and these have been recorded for all areas. Once the commemorations end in 2018, it is our intention to publish the results of our findings, along with the data we have found on personnel commemorated in our burial grounds.

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.

Library and Resource Centre

Janet Rose, Librarian

The society library / resource centre held at KCC Library, 80 Summerhouse Drive, Joydens Wood, Bexley, has opened almost every Wednesday in 2016. Attendances have fluctuated week by week but are similar to 2015. Requests for help at the library and by post have been very varied and have been dealt with very professionally by the volunteer researcher and her team. Several new members have been recruited during the year and have continued to visit us. A group of volunteers has worked valiantly to record the never ending supply of books etc, kindly donated by members and the catalogue now stands at over 5300 items.

The workshops held monthly have been a great success and provided members with new ideas, exciting leads and helpful information. Very many thanks to Victor Nutt for his enthusiasm and ability to find new subjects and leaders. An inspiring new list of workshops for 2017 is already available.

Twice a month a group of members meet at the library to transcribe historical items, which will eventually go online so out of area members can find interesting information. Present items being transcribed include St Albans Road School Dartford log book for 1930-1954 plus Freddie Foots war diaries.

Please come and visit the library or join a workshop in 2017. Thank you to everyone who contributes to the running of the library.

Editor's report

Pauline Heathcote, Editor

Once again four issues of the Journal were published and these were well filled with interesting and varied articles, alongside Society information. Many contributors continued to support the theme of the commemoration of World War 1.

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.

A monthly electronic Society Newsletter, started in November 2011, is freely available by sending your email address to the email information service, managed by Tony Codling. The subscribers number 633 with 572 email addresses.

Journals were exchanged with 35 Family History Societies; these were available at Dartford and Sevenoaks branch meetings. This number has reduced this year as more Societies are only offering digital copies.

Bromley Branch

Helen Daniels, Bromley representative

Bromley branch continued to welcome members and visitors to our Saturday meetings, with meetings seeing in excess of 40 members. The Committee thank the

task holders for their tireless efforts in assuring all meetings run smoothly and efficiently; Bookstall, exchange journals, genealogy help, projects, refreshments and all who help put away the chairs at the end of the meeting. We are continually looking for a volunteer to become Chair of the Committee and a Trustee on the main Committee.

This year members have been keen to get involved in another project in which the branch has started to transcribe the parish registers of Cudham. Work has finished on photographing the CWG as part of the TCWGPP project and a group of volunteers from Bromley branch visited Beckenham Crematorium and Cemetery to photograph the many War graves. Our thanks go to Barbara Philips, for her continuous work with the projects. This year we have had a good mix of speakers on varying subjects and had a highly successful Christmas Meal.

Dartford Branch

Janet Rose, Branch Chair

We have had another successful year with the average attendance per meeting of 100 members. Our speakers have been interesting and stimulating and some gave us much food for thought. Our success is due to the Dartford Branch committee and taskholders at the meetings to make the monthly meeting a success. A small group of members visited Edenbridge Museum in October and after refreshments and a tour of the museum enjoyed a guided walk round the town viewing some of the many ancient sites and buildings. Thanks to Hilary Waters who organised the trip. The annual Christmas lunch was enjoyed by 61 members and was of the usual high standard. Thank you to everyone who attends or helps to make Dartford Branch meetings so enjoyable.

Sevenoaks Branch

Barbara Attwaters, Branch Chair

As usual I will start with my thanks to all the committee. They are a very good team who all work very hard behind the scenes to keep the branch running as smoothly as it does. Also my thanks to all the helpers who turn up at each meeting, their help is much appreciated.

This year again, thanks to Chris Barnett, our programme secretary, we have had some very good speakers. Our December speaker was Dr Peter Ross and his talk on the Curious History of Christmas food. Some of it was very curious indeed and made us very glad that we had eaten our Christmas buffet food earlier! I would like to say thank you to all our members who bring food for the buffet, I am always amazed at the range and how much actually turns up on the night. Attendance at meetings has again been very disappointing. This year it has fluctuated from 41 members and visitors to 26 members (no visitors). There seems to be no pattern for this continuing downward trend: The total attendance this is 336. We have welcomed several visitors over the last couple of months from the Tunbridge Wells FHS (see chairs report). I am pleased to say that several of the visitors have now become members of our Society. The raffle continues to be a great success and is still 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 in December we made an amazing £60.00, some £14.00 more than last year so our total for 2016 = £319.00. Our thanks, again, must go to Barbara Stead who runs this so ably for us each month. The planning permission for the new

community hall has been given but I do not think we will feel any effects for at least another year.

Events

Barbara Attwaters, Coordinator

2016 has again been a busy year for the Society Event's Team. It was decided at the end of 2015 that we would endeavour to attend more local events such as village fetes, church fetes and other local society's open days within the community, provided they were indoors or at least under cover. We approached this with a little trepidation at first but found that it was almost as profitable as traveling further afield and certainly kept the expense of mileage down to a minimum. As a result we attended 15 Events. We have attracted more new members by doing this and altogether it has been very successful and rewarding.

Our biggest event of the year was undoubtedly the Sidcup Local History living pageant commemorating WW1. We attracted a lot of interest that day with our banners and power point display which David Turner put together especially for the event and the amazing Harry Potter family tree jigsaw made by Brian Kirk again especially for this event. As expected this attracted a lot of children and of course the parents came as well. It was a really successful day and we did attract some new members. There were also events taking place during the year in Bromley, Dartford, Bexley and Orpington. Our volunteers were able to respond to a special request from the FFHS for volunteers to help out at the ExCel Hobbycraft exhibition in November.

I would like to thank everyone who played a part in the events this year for their support as none of this could happen without you. Our volunteers play an important part in the success of our Society. If you think you would like to help please contact me on events@nwkfhs.org.uk

Publicity

Mike Week, Publicity Coordinator and Vice Chair

Talks have been given, articles published and local events attended but there is always the need to substantially increase these activities so as to spread the Society message as widely as possible. This is where you as members come in. Ask yourself the question "How can I help?" to identify organisations, local newspapers and magazines and local events where we can promote the Society. Do you belong to the family history group of your local U3A, are you a member of your local Active Retirement Association or do you have a local fete. We would love to hear from you. We want all possible sources of free publicity, perhaps simply leaving unwanted Journals where they may be re-read eg local doctor and dentist surgeries; hairdressers, local libraries etc. will spread the word.

The 2017 Society calendar is again selling well and it is hoped this will become a regular feature.

With the demise of the Tunbridge Wells FHS we have taken over the Kent parishes plus a few just over the border in Sussex that were their area and we would like to hear from any members who live in the vicinity of Tunbridge Wells and its environs to try to identify further publicity opportunities.