

GLASGOW & WEST OF SCOTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

A Scottish Charity No.SC 010866

Unit 13, 32 Mansfield Street, Glasgow G11 5QP

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2007

Office Bearers:

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Members' Interests Co-ordinator	Mr. John Bagley Mr. Leslie Fielding Mr. David W. Webster

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Editor	Miss Sheila Duffy
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Publications Secretary	Mr. Findlay Munro

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Research, Gift Aid, 1881 & 1891 Census	Mr. John Howarth
Southern Necropolis Co-ordinator	Mrs. Doreen Faulds
Strays Co-ordinator	
Team Leaders for Mansfield Park Volunteers	
Typesetting & Programmer	
Typist	

Bank:

Bank of Scotland plc
41 Princes Mall, East Kilbride

Library

Two years in the new premises and the shelves are filling up fast in spite of the deliberate purchase of CD-ROMs rather than books. We now have approximately 150 CDs and thanks are due to Alex Thomson, John Howarth and John McCallum for sterling work in installing them.

This year we have tried to source material relating to the areas for which we now hold the census and OPR microfilm. In particular, we have bought the 1841 Census indexes for Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire. We have also concentrated again on military records (I suppose for many people now the First World War is history rather than something your father never spoke about.) MIs for India and Ireland have also been bought. On order is the new facsimile edition of Roy's Military Map for Scotland, which will be a welcome addition to our map collection.

The librarian also wishes to thank sincerely Isobel Biggerstaff for completing the cataloguing and indexing of the microfiche collection. Dorothy Bell is also due thanks for dealing with the numerous journals received by the Society and grateful thanks are due once again to Liz and Russ Adams for helping to check the catalogue. Gina Fisher has helped with not only the purchase of stock but also the updating of the library catalogue.

Donations are always welcome and once again grateful thanks are due to a variety of donors for their generosity.

Membership

Membership figures at the end of 2007 stood at 2057, the lowest for quite a few years. The biggest reduction was in overseas membership, perhaps because they can get so much online now.

The Society would like to express its sincere gratitude to Fiona Downie for all her hard work as Membership Secretary. Thanks are also due to Rita Jeffrey for all the assistance she gave to Fiona over the past year.

Monthly Meetings

This year we had another session of talks on a variety of subjects. The January talk was on the story of Quarrier's homes in Bridge of Weir and the fate of its children and there was a distinctly Canadian flavour to later talks with one on Sir John McDonald of Canada and another about Scots emigrants there. Our tour around Strathclyde archives landed in Ayrshire this year, with a talk by their archivist, Dr. Christine Lodge. From the September talk on the 1820 Radical Rising, we moved into the 21st Century in October with a talk on the Genetics of family history. The year concluded with an heirlooms evening in St. Peter's Hall, Partick. Those members who came along on a wintry night enjoyed the refreshments provided and appreciated the display of family treasures. We are grateful to Jim Slavin for organising the speakers and venues.

Reports of all these meetings are carried in the Newsletter for those members unable to attend in person.

Newsletter

The journal is once again a wonderful mixture of old members and new, with contributions from all over the world. Most of the reaction is complimentary, although we are not resting on our laurels. We realise the competition from the internet and other research sources is relentless and if we are to "keep up" we must offer members and readers something they cannot get elsewhere...i.e. the personal touch.

We are still plagued by members paying their membership dues "late" and have tried to address this problem within the Newsletter with a renewal form built in, albeit unsuccessfully. The editor wishes to include really "everything" in to the "body of the kirk". This is not necessarily working and we may have to rethink our strategy on this.

We continue to be grateful for all the contributions we receive, which make the journal so lively.

Obituaries

It is with regret that we observe the passing of two stalwarts of the Society, Dr. Arthur Jamieson of Barnach and Miss Alison Macpherson. Dr Jamieson was one of the founding members of the Society and has quietly given his expertise to the Society over the years. Alison was an enthusiastic volunteer in the Research Centre and also worked on the Southern Necropolis project, as well as taking minutes at meetings, typing for the Society and collecting files from the Mitchell Library.

Premises

The Research Centre has ticked over quite routinely this year with no major upheavals. The main purchases have been two new film cabinets to house 46 new films, including 12 OPRs and 34 1891 Census films. We now have census films covering the whole of the Strathclyde area from 1841 – 1901, and most of these are accompanied by a surname index to make searching easier.

The opening times have remained the same as previously, and all credit is due to the volunteers who turn up so regularly and either guide other researchers or do the jobs listed in the work book. We thank them all, and in particular the team leaders, who make up the duty rotas and ensure that everything runs as smoothly as possible.

In addition to research, the Centre continues to be used for Council meetings, printing and mailing, and houses our library, which is expertly maintained and continually expanded by our librarian and her assistant. Once again we took part in the Glasgow "Doors Open" event. Over two days, despite a hitch on the morning of Day One, we had 48 visitors and a few came later to routine opening days. We also opened our doors to visitors during the Glasgow West End Festival and once again we had a goodly number of interested festivalgoers.

Many of the forty-odd volunteers at the Research centre have been helping there since the outset, and their loyalty is much appreciated. However we are always pleased to welcome new personnel who can replace those who fall by the wayside or can help out at busy periods.

Research

This has been a quieter year as many people are now using the internet for their research. We have dealt with 57 requests and although a few are ongoing we have no outstanding research. Many of the requests we receive say "I have hit a brick wall" and unfortunately we are not always able to help them either.

The Poor Law records continue to be a wonderful resource but not everybody appears there.

Eileen Bell is amazed at the information our researchers find for members and they must be equally thrilled.

Unfortunately we get requests saying, "Can you find my father?" If the parents have split that is usually possible but where it is an illegitimate birth there is little we can do to solve that especially when there was no legal adoption and babies were just found new homes.

We are grateful to Eileen and all the researchers who work so hard on each piece of research and make most members very happy.

Society Projects

a) Southern Necropolis project

The Southern Necropolis project is making steady progress. Volume 15 was completed this year taking us to 1886. Each volume is split into 8 – 10 sections and each section provides enough work for 8 – 10 people as there are thousands of entries in each volume. The volunteers have been fantastic, working steadily to transcribe. But like all volunteers, other commitments dictate the time available. A couple more volunteers who live in the area would be helpful. The passing of Alison Macpherson who jointly assisted in liaising with the Mitchell Library is a sad loss. Her help, support and friendship will be greatly missed. Jim Cameron has taken over her role and also does all the checking of batches. Nothing has been put on to the central computer at present.

b) Cathedral Burial Ground project

This project has been in abeyance this year due to health problems among the volunteers working on the project. In addition, work has had to stop in certain parts of the Burial Ground for health and safety reasons, as building works concerned with the fabric of the Cathedral were taking place. At present, the project is three-quarters complete. With the advent of better weather the work should recommence this year.

c) Marriage Index

This project is on-going. Members may submit ancestral charts for the purpose of creating a marriage index and possibly a birth index in the future. To date, the marriage index contains 36,000 names and is open to enquiries from members. Members can now access the index at our Research Centre, or make a written enquiry. A small fee is charged for postal enquiries.

d) National Burials Index Project

This project is moving to completion. The last six batches of work are ready to be sent to John Howarth for entry to the computer. Since the project was started in 1997, a great many people have given their time and expertise and the co-ordinator would like to thank everyone who has contributed.

Society website

The webmaster, Alistair Smith, has kindly supplied us with the following report.

Site Design

2007 was the first full year where the site ran on completely managed code. This has given a more consistent and reliable experience to visitors. The site is due for a redesign to bring it a bit more up to date. This should be launched in quarter one of 2008. I also plan to enhance the gallery and links pages to make them more useful and easier to use. The OMID contact, guestbook contact and the general contacting us forms are now so secure that automated spam "bots" no longer plague the site. Those miscreants that do bother to waste their time attempting to send inappropriate messages are never successful.

Statistics

The site is busier than ever with an average of over three and a half thousand pages viewed per day. The site is now more search engine friendly and this has meant a regular and effective indexing by the main search sites.

The Online Members' Interests Directory (OMID) and the Guestbook are still far and away the most used parts of the site. We have over 3000 Guestbook entries. During 2007, 141 emails were sent to people who had posted on the Guestbook and 1047 people made contact with members who had listed their details on the OMID. I would encourage any members who have not listed their interests online to do so as it is very popular.

I am grateful for the support from Iain McKenzie for his work on the OMID and Gordon Grant for his focus on the Guestbook. I welcome suggestions from members. I can be contacted via the website. Where appropriate and where time permits I am happy to take them on board.

The Society is very grateful to Alistair for his ongoing work and his support of the Society.

Publicity

2007 was a busy year for attending fairs and similar events.

In total we attended five such events with three of them having an early start of 5am and a late return home.

We started with the SAFHS Conference with sales of £170 and finished in Fife with sales of £356.

Between these, we also attended the Peoples' Palace which is a new venue run by Glasgow District Council. We took only £15 but it was a good event and we encouraged many who came to our stall to join the Society.

We have been invited again to the 2008 event along with five other societies. The venue is free so we do not lose any money. Another venue was the historical event held in the Glasgow City Chambers which keeps us in touch with the City Council and lets us meet some influential Council members.

In total we sold materials in excess of £700 in value.

These events were attended by John McCreadie and Elizabeth Smith along with her husband Michael, who helped with the long distance ones.

Rosemary Craig also helped out at Inverness.

Scottish Record Office visits

Due to a fall in the level of interest among members, no further bookings have been made to Edinburgh but Sheila Duffy has been instrumental in organising group bookings to Park Circus. Three separate block booking days were organised for research at Park Circus where there is access to almost all the records that the GRO in Edinburgh has via DIGROS (the Digital Imaging of the Genealogical Records Of Scotland's people). These were well attended, indeed they were oversubscribed, and good value as a day search is £14 compared with £17 in Edinburgh (although the time slot is shorter). Most members saved on travel costs as well. These research days, however, have to be booked very far in advance because of the pressure for the maximum eleven seats that there are in Park Circus. There are no more Society visits planned for the near future but the Society is exploring the possibility of evening sessions at Park – something that is not available at the moment, and we have had an initial favourable response, but no definite agreement. If this should get approval we will let members know both in the premises, at meetings and on the website.

Summary

Once again, despite a fall in our membership numbers, we have had another successful year. Our meetings are always well attended and our Research Centre is well used and busy. There are still many things we could be doing, but volunteers are always required for them and this does hold us back. If any members reading this feel that they could spare an hour or so, please let us know, as there is always a job waiting!

J.Slavin
Secretary