

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 2008

Office Bearers:

Honorary President	Lord Gordon of Strathblane C.B.E.
Honorary Vice-Presidents	Mr. Donald Whyte Mr. Roy Gillespie Mrs. Susan Miller Mrs. Mary Buchanan
Honorary Member	Sir Ilay Campbell of Succoth Bt.

Council Officers:

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Vice-Chairman	Mr. Russell Adams
Secretary	Mr. James Slavin
Treasurer	Mrs. Elizabeth H. Anderson

Ordinary Members of Council:

Research Assistant & Guestbook Editor	Mr. Gordon Grant
Printing Co-ordinator	Mr. Iain Milmine
1851 Census Co-ordinator	Mrs. Elizabeth Smith
Members' Interests Co-ordinator	Mr. John Bagley Mr. Leslie Fielding Mr. David W. Webster Ms. Sheila Cuthbertson

Ex-officio Members of Council:

Editor	Miss Sheila Duffy
Membership Secretary	Mrs. Janet McArthur
Publications Secretary	Mr. Findlay Munro

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1841 Census Co-ordinator & Publicity	Mr. John McCreadie
1861 & 1901 census Co-ordinator	Mr. James Bain
Cathedral MIs Co-ordinator	Mr. William Hutcheson
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Genealogical Advisers	Mrs Susan Miller Miss Edna Stark
Librarian & General Information files	Dr. Helen Cargill Thompson
Library Assistant	Miss Gina Fisher
Library ICT	Mr. John McCallum
Mailing Officer	Mr. Vic Currie
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Office Manager	Mrs. Mary Buchanan
OMID Co-ordinator	Mr. Iain McKenzie
Publishing Assistants	Mr. William Webb Mrs. Nan McConnell
Research, Gift Aid, 1881 & 1891 Census	Mrs. Eileen Bell
SAFHS Representative	Mr. Andrew Eadie
Southern Necropolis Co-ordinator	Ms Heather Bain
Strays Co-ordinator	Mrs. Elizabeth van Lottum
Team Leaders for Mansfield Park Volunteers	Mrs. Sandra Speedie Mrs. Olive Allardyce Mrs. Marion Munro
Typesetting & Programmer	Mr. Russell Adams
Typist	Mr. John Howarth Mrs. Doreen Faulds

Bank:

Bank of Scotland plc
41 Princes Mall, East Kilbride

Library

Three years in the new premises and we are already having to weed the book stock. We have added the Birlinn reprint of John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland (1832) to our copies of Blaeu (1654) and Roy's Great Map of Scotland (1747-1755), which together with the more recent Ordnance Survey maps of Scotland and our collection of gazetteers should help people to find the places they are looking for.

We have continued to expand our collection of statistical accounts and MIs for Scotland, buying CDs where possible, and have again acquired MIs for Ireland and some small and obscure cemeteries in India from Kabristan Archives. The librarian is personally eagerly awaiting the publication of the MIs for Kandy, Ceylon.

The librarian wishes to express her thanks to Isobel Biggerstaff for dealing with her revision of the layout of the microfiche collection, to Dorothy Bell for continuing to organise the numerous journals received by the Society and to Liz and Russ Adams for proofreading the numerous catalogue entries. Gina Fisher has helped again with the purchase of stock and the updating of the library catalogue. She appreciates very much the work done by John Howarth and the late and much-missed Alex Thompson in technically maintaining the catalogue database and that done by John McCallum in reorganising how our CDs are presented on the research computers. Her thanks go also to John McCreadie who acquired and assembled the new cupboard to house our growing collection of CDs.

Donations have been received again from numerous donors, whose generosity is very much valued.

Membership

Membership figures at the end of 2008 stood at 2146, an increase over the previous year. This figure is broken down into 1890 UK members, 104 in the USA and Canada, 136 in Australia and New Zealand, and 16 in Europe.

The Society would like to express its sincere gratitude to Fiona Downie for all her hard work as Membership Secretary over the past eleven years, and to Janet McArthur who took up the reins in June. Thanks are also due to Rita Jeffrey and Margaret Elliott for all the assistance they gave to Fiona over the past year.

It has been a difficult year for the Society in that we had a change of Membership Secretary with all the problems that ensued. Our membership system is quite complex to a new volunteer taking over the post of membership secretary and many members were disappointed that there were delays in receiving their packs and in receiving acknowledgements for payments. Hopefully this teething problem will not re-occur and the Council of the Society apologies wholeheartedly to those members affected.

Monthly Meetings

This year we had another session of talks on a variety of subjects. The January talk was given by Dee Williams of the Scottish Records Office about the updating of Register House and the new facilities on offer to the general public. This was followed by talks on the Scottish Non-Conformist Churches and on a lighter note, David MacBrayne and his ships. In April, on the same evening as our AGM, the Society was given a very interesting talk by one of our members, Ian Brown, on how to write your own family history. In May, Graeme MacDonell completed his talk on Sir John Macdonald and in June the Society held a Question and Answer evening in St. Peter's Hall, Partick. Our talk at the September meeting was about genealogies in the Bible while in October Dr. Dobson gave us a talk on Scottish Emigration to Colonial America. In November we had, unusually, a duo of speakers, Willie Cross and Monty Dart, talking about Glasgow Disasters. 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. The number of members attending this year was very low and next year a different programme will be arranged for this social evening. 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.

The Society, however, would like to ask our local members for greater support for our evening meetings. It has been noticed that there has been a fall in numbers of those attending. There is quite a financial cost to the Society to host these meetings and we would ask members to come along when possible. If the topics of the talks are not felt to be attractive enough, please contact the secretary and advise him of those topics which members would prefer.

Newsletter

The Society continues to publish a packed Newsletter three times a year with contributions not only from members but also from other interested parties. For example long term member, Ian Brown, wrote a lengthy piece about "Writing Your Family History", based on a talk he gave to members and Robert Watt – a relatively new member who lives in Canada – has become a regular contributor with articles in Newsletters 82 and 83 with more to come in Newsletters yet to be printed. In the March 2008 Journal, Duncan Beaton gave us a very detailed article on the MacNicol's of Argyll – the second part of which was published in the June journal.

While there seems to be fewer "Can Anyone Help" queries (has Google answered most folk's questions?) there is an increasingly lively "Letters to the Editor" section, with comments and suggestions from all over the world.

John Howarth, the typesetter and another well established member, gives invaluable help to make the magazine look as exciting as it does.

The editor always welcomes contributions, however short. Often short and pithy is the most helpful! Those with something to say should e-mail their articles as soon as possible.

Obituaries

We have to note the passing during this session of one of our members, Alex Thomson. Alex served on the Council of the Society on several occasions, but he is best remembered for the sterling work he did as the Society's

computer expert. He will be very much missed by the Society. Our sympathies go out to his wife, Doreen, who is also a member. A full obituary was printed in Issue 83 in the Newsletter of October 2008.

Just before this report was printed, the Society was informed of the death in early January 2009, of Alex Hall, another of the Society's stalwart volunteers. A full obituary will appear in a Newsletter during 2009.

Premises

In late August 2008 we were very sad to lose our chief ICT assistant and buyer, Alex Thomson. Alex also served two stints on the Council, dating from 2001. His knowledge and expertise in the field of computers and printers was of enormous value to the Society. He was also the mentor and guru of those of us who were less computer-literate than he was.

Over the past year the Society has bought a new computer, a new cupboard for our ever-expanding collection of CDs, and an overhead projector for use in our talks about family history research to other groups.

As well as being open to members for research, the Research Centre continues to be used for Council Meetings and informal meetings, for in-house printing and mailing, for displaying our library, and for credit card transactions.

This last year we were involved with the West End Festival again and the Centre was open for visitors on two full days between 13th and 28th June. We also took part in the Glasgow Open Days week in September. On both occasions we were very busy and recruited new members. A separate open day was organised for a visit from Lanarkshire FHS of which twelve members attended.

We extend our thanks to all our volunteers who man the centre so loyally, and especially to those who spend hours helping to organise and man the Centre at Open Days. Without these people it would be impossible to hold such events. We have welcomed several new volunteers this year, but there is always room for more. Please contact any member of the various teams or any Council member if you are interested.

Publications

Sales of publications have declined in the past year, despite the introduction of 14 new publications. The new Ramshorn burials CD is now available and several other new additions to the list are planned.

Thanks are due to Liz and Russell Adams for looking after sales at meetings and to John McCreadie for organising sales at Fairs and other events.

Publicity

The Fairs the Society attended in 2008 were mixed as regards success.

The SAFHS Conference brought us in sales of £320, whereas the figure for the Argyll Gathering was £78.

Sadly the national one at Gateshead only gave us £90 in sales. The LDS road show (over 3 days) only gave us £18 in sales. The Society also attended the Tay Valley Roots Fair but was poorly located in the building and it was not successful financially. The Trossachs Village Fair at Brig O'Turk, was a small affair but created a lot of interest. One of the main reasons for poor sales was the lack of new materials. We had regular customers asking what was new.

The Gateshead Fair was not as busy as it has been in the last few years and as a result we will not attend in 2009.

We expect the Homecoming Festival to create a number of events in Scotland, hence the reason we will stay at "home". Hopefully we will have new material to see this year.

Not much was done in the way of publicity in general for the Society. We did not spend any money on advertising but may investigate that for opportunities in 2009. We have been represented on the radio by a few of our members and they have taken advantage of this to mention the Society during the broadcast.

We hope to start workshops at the Research centre during 2009 which we hope will boost our membership and give us the opportunity to sell more.

Research

As was said last year, the requests for research are becoming fewer each year. In 2008, there were only 35 pieces of research compared with well over 100 when the research co-ordinator first took up her post. We still, however, have a keen, very experienced group of researchers who work away at various sources and have amazing results which please our members greatly.

Occasionally a member will come back to us after a couple of years to let us know they have solved a problem. Several of us tried to find out about the father of one member who had given his name in the form of John James Smith on his marriage certificate but eventually turned out to be John Smith James when his army records were traced. So much for the theory that marriage certificates are the more accurate because the people are actually present (not the actual names).

Adoption is always a problem but we try to offer advice and give the names of charities which might be able to help.

At the moment we do not know what is happening at Park Circus and bookings are only being taken from month to month. It must be very unsettling for the people who work there. The co-ordinator has not yet been to Edinburgh with all its new facilities but understands that it is well worth a visit and is not expensive.

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

SAFHS

Andrew Eadie attended the two council meetings of the Scottish Association of Family History Societies (SAFHS) as the representative of Glasgow & West of Scotland Family History Society on 15th March 2008 and 25th October 2008. He also attended the AGM of SAFHS that was held prior to the March meeting.

The meetings provide an opportunity for the Society to find out more about what is happening in Scotland regarding family history matters, particularly at present with the opening of the new Family History Centre in Edinburgh. The meetings also provide a forum for the exchange of information among members.

Where required at the meetings Andrew put forward the view of Glasgow & West of Scotland FHS. At the meeting in October he stressed how important it was for the SAFHS website to be upgraded as this had been discussed for two years. It is important for the SAFHS website to demonstrate how professional the organisation is and to provide links to the member family history societies. The revamped website was up and running approximately four weeks after the SAFHS October meeting.

Society Projects

a) Southern Necropolis project

The Southern Necropolis project continues to make steady but slow progress with the completion of Volume 16 taking us to 1890. The work of the volunteers has been fantastic, working steadily to transcribe. No data has been put on to the central computer as yet but members are welcome to request look-ups up to 1890.

b) Cathedral Burial Ground project

Due to the appalling weather over 2008, it was impossible to get dry enough conditions on site for recording purposes, but transferring of information to computer did take place. Iain MacKenzie and John McCreadie have managed to do some more surveying but at present there is restoration work going on at the east end of the building which has made access difficult. Over two thirds of the ground has now been surveyed and we hope for a better summer in 2009 so that we can, once again, make progress.

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 38,000 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 now complete. The Ramshorn data has now been published on CD and the Dumbarton entries are currently being checked. 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

I am pleased with the site re-design that took place in early 2008. It now has a more professional and modern look. I put a lot of work into ensuring it is compatible with as many browsers as possible. It is also now compliant with the strict standards set out by the W3C. Other improvements to the site include: a new right menu which shows news; upcoming meetings; recent Guestbook postings; OMID surname menu. The links page now has a popularity tracker, which shows, for example, that the Brothers Keeper and Mitchell Library sites are the most visited. The OMID and Guestbook now have the same look and feel as the rest of the site. The new world map showing where visitors come from clearly shows the global appeal of the site. I still have the gallery improvements to complete and have more behind the scenes enhancements to work on this year.

Statistics

A new statistics system implemented by our hosting provider gives detailed day by analysis of site usage. It also separates search engine traffic from normal visitors. Over three and a half thousand pages are viewed per day. The Online Members' Interests Directory (OMID) and the Guestbook are still far and away the most used parts of the site. We now have 3256 Guestbook entries. During 2008, 125 emails were sent to people who had posted on the Guestbook and 741 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. The newly designed meetings page along with the 'next meeting' headline on every page has seen the meetings page rise in popularity. It is possible to view all meetings from 1995 to the current session.

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

Summary

We are pleased to note that our numbers are moving upwards and that the Society is in a healthy condition. We have a good attendance at our monthly meetings and the Research centre is always busy. There are several projects being lined up but all need volunteers to do the work. If there is anybody out there who can help, please let us know.

**J.Slavin
Secretary**