

Minutes of the Centre User Group meeting held on Friday 9 April 2010 in the Lord Clerk Register's room, GRH at 14:00 Hours

1. Attendees

Duncan Macniven (GROS & chair), Dave Brownlee (DB, NAS), Kirsty Bowie (KB, GROS), Dee Williams (DW, GROS), Iain Ferguson (IF, GROS), Helen Ewing (HE, GROS), Ken Nisbet (KN, Genealogist), Anne Garven (AG, Genealogist & ASGRA), Bruce Bishop (BB, SAFHS), Janet Bishop (JB, ASGRA), Alison Fordyce (AF, NHS), Lloyd Pitcairn (LP, Genealogist)

Apologies: George MacKenzie (NAS), Ewan Steed (Genealogist), Paul Parr (GROS), Gill Amos (GROS)

2. Previous Minutes of 13 November 2009

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

3. Matters Arising

Item 5.2 – Comments on the proposal to remove customer access to microfiche and microfilm were all submitted by 30 November 2009. The proposed changes were adjusted in the light of responses and have since been implemented.

Item 5.5 – NAS had investigated and, where possible, sorted all problems related to blocking of websites

4. General Issues

4.1 The travel trade evening reception, which had been held on 4 February 2010, was well attended and deemed a success. It had been noted that few hoteliers had attended the event so an additional event may be run for them to come and view the facility.

5. Centre Software

5.1 Enhancements

5.1.1 KB explained how changes had been made to the operation of the ScotlandsPeople (SP) network software to speed up the system. Enhancements also included:

- Old Parish Register deaths and burials now available
- Customers can scroll up and down the modern day records in the same manner as DIGROS.
- Customers can search for a marriage prior to 1929 using the surnames of both the groom and bride.
- Around £28k has been spent on the hardware to ensure that it is less vulnerable to a single point of failure.

5.1.2 It was reported that some customers find the new system frustrating because they feel that more clicking is required than the DIGROS system to search for records.

DW explained that the Dundas room would change across to the new SP system once the new system was able to accommodate evening visit bookings.

5.2 Planned Changes to the Software

5.2.1 The work on updating the OPR indexes is still in progress. Ultimately this work will allow regular updates to take place as errors are reported.

5.2.2 GROS are in the process of amending the search criteria for the OPR indexes so that it is possible to search for entries after 1854. There are instances after 1854 where the birth, death or marriage is included in the Old Parish Registers but does not feature in our statutory records. It was suggested that some local registrars were not in place when civil registration commenced so the events continued to be logged in the OPRs instead.

5.2.3 The 2010 indexes have now being added to the customer DIGROS system but the ScotlandsPeople network has yet to be updated. The indexes for the ScotlandsPeople network should be updated within the next 3 months.

5.2.4 A working group has been established to take forward the release of the 1911 census. The main task of the group is to ensure that the 1911 census is available at the Centre and at our pay-per-view website no later than the 4 April 2011.

5.2.5 The missing 1851 census images will be loaded on to the stand alone computers as a temporary measure whilst indexing takes place. We are still awaiting the images to allow this to happen. There have been problems with the quality of the images because of the poor condition of some of the original records.

5.3 Software Failure

5.3.1 DIGROS failed on the 5 April due to a power cut and in turn the AS 400 shut down. The reason and impact of the shut down on the system will be investigated.

5.4 New Digitised Records

5.4.1 NAS have been digitising the wills and testaments from 1902 to 1925. The date for release at the Centre has yet to be confirmed.

5.4.2 NAS have also digitised their valuation rolls from 1855 to 1915. Only the inter-census years have been fully indexed from 1855-1915. It is the intention of NAS to 'waypoint' the remaining years, the same method they have used for church records, which will facilitate browsing of the non-indexed Valuation Rolls.

6. Centre Search Rooms

6.1 The new electronic service that had replaced access to some of the microfilm and microfiche, was working well. However, it was accepted that it would need to be evaluated over a longer period of time to see how it coped during the peak periods.

6.2 Seat D26 in the Dundas room will be equipped with a new ScotlandsPeople terminal for use by season ticket holders if the Centre is not very busy. However, during

peak periods the seat will be sold to a customer. This seat is additional to seat D29, which is for the exclusive use of season ticket holders.

6.3 A discussion took place around what census records exist prior to 1841. It was agreed that we should gather together a list of what exists and ensure that customers are aware of other sources of information.

Action: DW to compile list of known pre-1841 census records.
BB to provide details stored of lists held by SAFHS

7. Local Family History Centres Update

7.1 GROS has yet to establish how to install a secure internet connection to local family history centres so this project is on hold until a solution is found.

7.2 DW noted that she had yet to receive a list from NAS of all Local Authorities that satisfy their guidance on proper arrangements for storage and access to records.

7.3 Some concerns were raised that the opening of local family history centres may impact on the availability of jobs for professional genealogists.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 DM confirmed that the report produced for Gateway Review No. 5 – Benefits Realisation was very complimentary and he thanked everyone who had taken part in the interviews. The report would be copied in confidence to members.

8.2 DW explained how a workshop was being planned to consider how the ScotlandsPeople and GROS service for family history should develop over the next 10 years to 2020. The workshop will consider what we want to achieve and what our priorities should be. User representation would be very welcome.

8.3 It was agreed that there was a need for a contact point for season ticket holders at the Centre to raise any issues at these meetings on their behalf. JB offered to take on this role though this will be reviewed if the task proved to be too onerous.

8.4 BB requested that ScotlandsPeople attend the Nairn family history fair in October 2010. Hard wired internet access was available. DW explained how her budget was very limited but that she would assess whether there were adequate funds nearer the date.

8.5 DW confirmed that she was planning a series of 'Getting Started' workshops for people starting off their family history.

9. Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The date of the next meeting will be arranged during September 2010.

Dee Williams
19 May 2010