

## **Minutes of the Centre User Group meeting held on Friday 12 June in the Lord Clerk Register's room, GRH at 14:00 Hours**

### **1. Attendees**

Duncan Macniven (DM, GROS), George MacKenzie (GM, NAS), Paul Parr (PP, GROS), Dee Williams (DW, GROS), Gill Amos (GA, GROS), Helen Ewing (GROS), Iain Ferguson (GROS), Sandy Noble (GROS), Ken Nisbet (Genealogist), Anne Garven (Genealogist & ASGRA), Angus Mitchell (Genealogist), Bruce Bishop (SAFHS), Ewan Steed (Genealogist), Alison Fordyce (NHS), Lloyd Pitcairn (Genealogist)

**Apologies:** Anne Cruickshank (Genealogist), Alison Horsburgh (NAS)

### **2. Previous Minutes of 12 December 2008**

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Item 7.1.8 – DW reported that the tape was no longer a hazard.

### **4. Progress Since Last Meeting**

4.1 DM confirmed that the centre had fully opened on the 12 January and that up until May 2009 there had been over 10,500 visitors and 2,000 taster sessions.

4.2 Customers now tend to book and pay in advance for their seats so it means that early morning queues are minimal.

4.3 The ongoing tram works has impacted on the centre by cutting off the electricity on two occasions and the water supply on one occasion. DM has written to Scottish Water requesting an explanation of the loss of mains water on the 28 May, which caused the centre to shut in New Register House due to lack of toilet facilities.

4.4 The concerns that a large number of customers would abuse the two hour taster sessions had proved unfounded.

### **5. ScotlandsPeople Network-Update**

#### **System Enhancements**

5.1 GA explained how there had been some performance issues with the existing system. In simplistic terms, one processor faces customers and takes commands and three processors execute the requested commands. There have been performance issues with the code because every county and district is loaded for every search. If the customers then sorts by registration district or mother's name, this creates a big impact on the memory.

5.2 The resource and time to sort the current problems were uncertain. The extent of the problem will be better understood once it has been fully evaluated. But was hoped that the system enhancements would be complete in 2/3 months time.

5.3 GA explained how DIGROS simply provided results for the whole of Scotland and did not separate the results into areas of Scotland. She suggested that anyone wanting to get the same results as DIGROS should do a search on 'Scotland' rather than 'All Scotland', which avoids searching the registration district list.

5.4 GA explained that the planned enhancements would include:-

- The ability to search under both the bride and groom's name for a marriage search;
- The addition of Old Parish Register deaths and burials;
- The ability to search up and down all years if the same year is entered in the same manner as DIGROS, and

5.5 GA confirmed that the AS 400 system currently used for DIGROS, which is DOS based, is scheduled to be scrapped and thereafter the DIGROS system will be on a new platform for registrars.

5.6 GA was asked whether a back button would be installed as part of the planned enhancements, which is a feature on the DIGROS systems. GA explained why the back button could not be replicated on the new system.

5.7 Confirmation was given that there are no plans to remove DIGROS from the Dundas room, until the ScotlandsPeople system enhancements were complete.

5.8 The electronic feedback form that is available on the Centre software system remains defunct. The current design only works on Outlook, which needs an email system. Staff are currently looking for a solution to the problem.

**Action:** Electronic feedback form to be made operational

5.9 Reporting of image and index errors was discussed and in particular problems with links to RCEs. DIGROS is updated when poor images or incorrect index links are reported. The images were quickly replaced but no index updates had been made to the Centre system since August 2008. The indexes would however be updated when the enhancements had been made.

5.10 The genealogists confirmed that they have not seen forms in the search rooms to allow them to report poor images or incorrect index links. DW confirmed that such a form would be made available for customers.

**Action:** Form to be made available for customers to report errors

5.11 GA explained how software will be made available to staff working in the Dundas room that will allow them, during quiet periods, to add the mother's surname to the indexes.

5.12 GA confirmed that the seat booking system was now enhanced such that it was possible for staff to select a particular seat for a customer.

5.13 LP welcomed the enhanced seat booking system because it allows him to bring in groups of people and book them into the secluded part of the Matheson Dome.

### **Additional Records**

5.14 GM explained that in around 18-24 months, the Kirk Session records should be added to the system though they would not be indexed by names. Customers would need to select a year and then read through the registers.

5.15 Catholic registers are in the process of being indexed for a launch of the births and baptisms on the ScotlandsPeople pay per view website during September 2009. There is no agreed date yet for launching these records at the Centre.

5.16 DM confirmed that some non-statutory military and marine records currently stored in NRH have yet to be indexed. There was no firm programme for making these records available either on line or at the Centre.

5.17 NAS are in the process of digitising criminal records and High Court trials and valuation rolls for the inter-censal years. The valuation rolls are not fully indexed and will simply take you to a street. It may be possible to digitise these records up to 1915 because there is no legal restriction. The early sasine records are also being captured from 1617 though comprehensive information is only available from around the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

5.18 NAS are planning to digitise wills and testaments from 1901 to 1915.

## **6. ScotlandsPeople Centre**

### **Search Rooms**

6.1 BB asked whether it would be possible to have the keyboards cleaned daily rather than weekly to prevent the spread of swine flu. DM noted that the risk of transmissions of the virus in that manner was very small and DW agreed to consider what might be done.

**[Post Meeting Note:** Tubs of keyboard cleaners are now available on every set of desks for customers to clean their keyboards prior to use.  
Weekly cleans by staff will continue.]

6.2 BB asked whether it would be possible for customers to have permanent use of the lockers re-instated. DM and GM confirmed that, for security reasons, it would not be possible for customers to start storing their belongings overnight in the lockers.

6.3 BB reported that some customers are drinking hot drinks in the Dundas room. He believed that this was happening because there is no signage to state that this was not permitted. DW confirmed that signs on the new computers state that this is not possible but that the DIGROS computers do not have new signage stuck to them, only desk number signs.

**Action:** Sign to be erected to confirm that it is not

acceptable to drink in the Dundas room

6.4 BB reported that some customers have been answering their mobile phones in the search rooms. Everyone agreed that this was unacceptable and that the supervisors should speak to people causing annoyance.

### **Season Tickets**

6.5 DW reported that the new style of season ticket were being issued when customers renewed their passes.

### **Feedback from Customers**

6.6 This issue is covered under items 5.8 and 5.10.

### **Café**

6.7 The café is operated by Heritage Portfolio. The patronage for the café is not huge so it continues to be subsidised for an extended trial period.

### **Shop**

6.8 The shop continues to sell a variety of products with genealogy related books proving to be the most popular item.

### **Library, Standalone Computers & Whitelist**

6.9 Flash adobe acrobat will be installed on the new system to allow images from other genealogy related websites to be viewed.

6.10 It was agreed that in future library updates should be circulated to SAFHS as well as ASGRA.

**Action:** Library updates to be circulated to both SAFHS & ASGRA

6.11 It was requested that a current set of phone books be put into the search rooms.

**[Post Meeting Note:** The cost of a complete set of telephone directories for Scotland would be c. £130. But the information may also be available on the internet]

## **7. Local Family History Centres**

7.1 DM explained how letters had been issued to the local authorities back in October 2007 asking whether they were interested in being linked to the ScotlandsPeople network. Each local authority must comply with specific standards detailed in the letter, which relate to collaborative working between the two parties and preservation of the records.

7.2 Two temporary arrangements have been made. Park Circus in Glasgow has access to DIGROS though this arrangement cannot continue indefinitely because of

the need to upgrade the security. The Burns monument centre at Kilmarnock has access to the ScotlandsPeople pay per view website using vouchers.

7.3 The enhancements for the ScotlandsPeople centre software need to be complete prior to work commencing on the link to local family history centres. The infrastructure used for the network would need to be secure.

7.4 At this stage, it was not possible to put a date on the completion of the work needed to allow local family history centres access to the ScotlandsPeople software. January was probably the earliest date that could be expected.

## **8. Any Other Business**

8.1 Local authority libraries should offer discounted 60 credit vouchers to new customers for £6 [50% discount] and then further vouchers should be sold with a 20% discount. It would appear that a member of the public purchased a discounted voucher at Aberdeen library and then tried to use it at a local SAFHS centre. Control of discounted voucher purchases at libraries will be raised with the Scottish Library & Information Council (SLIC) to ensure that customers are aware of the restrictions. Also, notices to be erected stating that vouchers not purchased through SAFHS cannot be used on their premises.

8.2 BB asked whether it would be possible to have a stock of leaflets to send to local SAFHS centres. DW offered to provide some leaflets but it was also suggested that a pdf version of the leaflet should be available on the Hub website as well as some high definition photos of the Centre.

**Action:** PDF version of hub leaflet and photos to be made available for download on Hub website

8.3 The accessibility of the Lord Clerk Register's room was debated. ScotlandsPeople staff appeared to be unaware that a lift existed in General Register House to take people to the meeting room. DW confirmed that she would ensure that an email would be sent to staff to ensure that they are aware of the lift.

8.4 The release date of the 1911 census was requested. DM confirmed that the 1911 census would not be released until April 2011 because of the confidentiality clause in the legislation. It was confirmed that the Scottish 1911 census detailed the number of children produced by the marriage, in the same manner as the English 1911 census.

8.5 DM confirmed that no microfilm will be produced for the 1911 census because that technology has been superseded by digitisation. The census will be available in electronic format through the ScotlandsPeople networks at local family history centres, in the ScotlandsPeople centre or on the pay per view website.

8.6 AM noted that he was in discussions with local authorities and private cemetery companies to try and get burial and cemetery records released.

## **9. The Future of the Centre User Group**

9.1 DM said that he found the meetings to be helpful though there was still a possibility that a combined group looking at both the pay per view website and the Centre might be established in the future. No decisions had been made so the group would continue to meet in its current format.

## **10. Date of Next Meeting**

9.1 The date of the next meeting was set for 27 October. [Post meeting note: This was changed to Thursday 29 October 2009 at 14:00, because the LCR was unavailable on the 27 October.]

**Dee Williams**

8 July 2009