

Minutes of the Centre User Group meeting held on Friday 24 September 2010 in the Lord Clerk Register's room, GRH at 14:00 Hours

1. Attendees

Duncan Macniven (GROS & chair), Gill Amos (GA, GROS), Dee Williams (DW, 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), Iain Ferguson (GROS), Helen Ewing (GROS)

2. Previous Minutes of 9 April 2010

2.1 The content of the minutes of the last meeting were accepted though DM asked that the year of the meeting be included on the front page.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 AG reported that she was still having problems accessing or viewing images on some of the websites on the whitelist including the BT residential phone numbers, Ancestry and some of the Irish websites. AG requested that the complete list be reviewed.

*Dn. NAS have requested that only specific website problems be reported.
Email sent by DW to user group requesting list of problem websites.
BT & Irish Census for 1901 & 1911 reported*

3.2 Item 6.3 – DW is still compiling a list of pre-1841 census data, which will be issued with the draft minutes of this meeting.

4. Centre Software

4.1 Enhancements

4.2 Since the last meeting, the following changes have been made to the software:

- Next census and previous census buttons have been added.
- The new census buttons automatically move the ages, if inserted, by 10 years.
- If a customer logs out of a session it is no longer possible for the next person to log on and view the searches made by the previous customer. Instead the system automatically wipes the information after 10 seconds.
- Various work has been undertaken that is not visible to the customers to tidy the system to make it more efficient and to restructure some code.
- We have removed the upper limit for OPRs. Customers should just put in the year or range of years they are looking for.

4.3 Planned Changes to the Software

4.3.1 Work is underway that will allow customers to log on to the system after 16:30. This will mean that customers attending evening visits will be able to use the new software rather than the clone Digros system.

4.3.2 The indexes for the ScotlandsPeople network should be updated within the next 3 months to include all new indexes up to July 2010. Currently the indexes go up to January 2010.

4.3.3 The missing 1851 census images will no longer be loaded on to the stand alone computers as a temporary measure whilst re-indexing takes place but instead will be added once the re-indexing project is complete after March 2011.

4.4 New Digitised Records

1911 Census

4.4.1 The 1911 census will be released during early April 2011. The set up of the test rig has commenced and no problems are envisaged. The exact date of the release will be confirmed during January 2011. The 2011 census takes place on 27 March 2011 ahead of the 1911 census.

4.4.2 These records will be made available both at the ScotlandsPeople Centre and on line at www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk . If a solution has been found to the problem of providing a connection to local family history centres that satisfy our security requirements then there will also be access at any local family centres that have been connected to the Centre network. DM confirmed that these records will not be available on microfilm.

4.4.3 It was hoped that an exhibition on the census will take place in NRH during the month of April 2011 to celebrate the release of the 1911 census.

Others

4.4.4 The digitisation of the Kirk session records is nearly complete. It was suggested that the release of the Kirk session records could result in more births, baptisms, marriages and death entries being found or possibly some census records. For instance, the church of Scotland records for Knockando in 1835 list all people in the parish who can read and write.

4.4.5 The digitisation of the valuation rolls from 1855 to 1955 is well advanced. Only the inter-census years will be fully indexed from 1855-1955. 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.

Dn. Since the meeting NAS have confirmed that they are currently in discussion with FamilySearch, with a view to get them to continue working at Thomas Thomson House for the next 3 to 4 years to digitise the Register of Deeds, cemetery records and some poor relief records.

4.4.6 Work is underway to add the Catholic parish registers to the Centre network. No date is yet available with regards when this work will be complete.

5. Centre Search Rooms

5.1 The genealogists explained that they often need access to the latest indexes to help them establish family relationships. Currently the clone Digros system for customers is updated weekly and the Centre network is updated possibly twice a year. For this reason, some genealogists are not keen to move across to the Centre network. GA explained that work was underway to transfer all of the records from the 'AS400' system to 'sequel server'. The first set of records to be worked on was marriages and once they were transferred across to the sequel server no updates on the records that have been transferred would take place on either the clone customer Digros system or the Centre network until the work was complete around March 2011.

6. Local Family History Centres Update

6.1 GROS and NAS believe that a solution to providing a secure connection to specified computers may have been found but it needs to be tested. It is hoped that a test rig will be set up in the near future.

7. Charges

7.1 DW explained how the income currently received for the Centre fails to cover its running costs. The search fees are set by regulations approved by Scottish ministers.

7.2 Scottish ministers will be asked to consider a proposal to change the search fees for the Centre, however, they have not yet had an opportunity to consider the proposal.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Clarification was asked about the availability of the ScotlandsPeople Centre network terminals D26 & D29 to season ticket holders. Item 6.2 of the previous minutes for the meeting held on 9 April stated:

"Item 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."

8.2 DM thanked those who had attended the GROS workshop that looked at the strategy for the next 10 years for family history. Their contribution to the workshop had been very helpful. DM agreed that a copy of the strategy could be copied to the Centre User Group for their information.

Action: DW to circulate copy of strategy relating to family history to Centre User Group

8.3 It was agreed that mobiles should not be used by customers in the corridor areas and that signs should be displayed to confirm this. It was also agreed that mobile phones could be used in the café.

Action: DW to arrange for signs in corridors to be erected

8.4 The genealogists reported a lack of white forms in the search rooms that allow customers to report faults.

Dn. DW has asked for the staff duty rota to include for a check on forms and leaflets and refill as necessary

8.5 The heating in the ladies toilet in NRH was deemed to be inadequate with the room often cold. DM was not keen to have high room temperatures in a toilet area, particularly when GROS was trying hard to reduce its energy usage.

8.6 The taps in the ladies toilet in NRH were reported as running far too long.

Dn. GROS accommodation have confirmed that this is now fixed

8.7 A request was made for ScotlandsPeople staff to use rubber thimbles when counting photocopies for customers using the clone Digros system in the Dundas room.

Dn. DW has ordered 'finger cones' from Lyreco for staff use

8.8 The toilet roll holders in NRH toilets are so full that it is not possible to pull the paper out.

Dn. GROS accommodation have confirmed that staff have been advised to stop overfilling the holders

8.9 The air conditioning in the Dundas room was reported as often being too hot or too draughty.

Dn. GROS accommodation have confirmed that this is now fixed

8.10 The Scottish Government have an agenda to try and simplify the public sector. With this in mind, DM explained how a working group was currently considering whether it would be possible to amalgamate or improve the working arrangements between GROS, NAS and the Registers of Scotland. The working group was considering various options and planned to have their review complete by November 2010.

8.11 The genealogists pointed out that a large number of people, possibly 30-40%, interested in genealogy don't use computers. It was agreed that there may be some merit in offering a talk that provides an introduction to computing as well an introduction to the digitised records.

8.12 The poor acoustics in the café were raised because some customers were finding it difficult to hear each other talk due to the hard surfaces that exist. DW was asked whether it would be possible to install curtains or soft furnishings to try and deaden the sounds. DW explained that funds were tight so she doubted whether anything could be done.

8.13 A request was made to improve signage for the café because many customers hover outside the entrances to the Dundas room whilst deciding where they should go.

Action: DW to assess signage for the cafe

9. Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The date of the next meeting is 14 January 2011.

Dee Williams

26 October 2010