



# SussexLink



April 2006

A Newsletter for the Sussex Family History Group

Vol 4 No 2

## Television series stimulates new interest in family history

The second series of *Who do you think you are?* on BBC TV seems to have stimulated a burst of interest in Family History this Spring. Not only was there much curiosity at the ESRO event sponsored by local radio on 11th February, but our library is attracting an increased number of visitors, a family history taster event put on by Cuckfield Museum was inundated with enquiries, and we as a Group are receiving a high level of applications for membership.

Nick Barratt, talking at the Annual Conference, gave us some insight not only into how the programmes are made, but why the series are successful. The programmes, particularly in the second series and almost certainly also in the third likely to be screened in the autumn, focus on the subjects' need to resolve emotional trauma by an understanding of their family history. I have long suspected that it is the potential of family history to assist people to come to a better understanding of their own roots that has been one of the main drivers of the level of interest that we have seen in recent years.

If there is a new wave of people taking up family history their most pressing need is to have some basic help in how to set about it. Most are not so naïve as to think that it is as simple as it appears on TV, and understand that that is television! But there is, I believe, a real opportunity here for SFHG, and other FHS, to make a difference, an opportunity that the new Executive and particularly our new Education Officer will be looking at most urgently.

### New Executive Committee

The new Executive Committee shown in the panel to the right was elected at the AGM to serve for the coming year. Welcome to John Commins, Wendy Deamer and Mike Morley, who have been elected to the Executive for the first time.

### Education Officer

For some time I have been looking for someone to take on the role of Education Officer, and help us meet some of the challenges that we face. I am pleased to report that Wendy Deamer, who has a background in education, has agreed to take on this role. Unfortunately we have had less success so far in finding someone to spearhead publicity.

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Edited by Brian Cutler (chairman@sfhg.org.uk)

### Your Executive Committee 2006/2007

Chairman: Dr Brian Cutler

Vice Chairman: Mick Henry

Treasurer: Judy Pepper

Secretary: Val Orr

Committee Members:

Wyn Burgess

John Commins

Wendy Deamer

Clem Frank

Trevor Hanson

Terry Kettell

Mike Morley

## Civil Registration - Update

Maggie Loughran, the administrator for FFHS, writes that on 17th November 2005, the General Register Office [GRO] published a consultation document "Registration Modernisation". This was the GRO's response to the failure of the Regulatory Reform Order on the Registration of Births and Deaths to be approved by the Parliamentary Reform Committees in late 2004.

This consultation document outlines how the GRO plans to implement many of the proposals in the Regulatory Reform Order without having to obtain an Act of Parliament. The Federation response to this consultation is now available online at: [www.ffhs.org.uk/Societies/Liaison/News.htm](http://www.ffhs.org.uk/Societies/Liaison/News.htm)

In a separate communication Geoff Riggs, the Director of Computer & Internet Facilities for FHHS, has commented that alongside the developments above, the GRO is progressing the Digitisation of Vital Events (DoVE) Project, which will computerise the records of previous registrations. The first in a series of News Bulletins can be read on the GRO website at [www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/aboutus/lookingahead/Digitisation\\_of\\_Vital\\_Events.asp](http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/aboutus/lookingahead/Digitisation_of_Vital_Events.asp)

The Project includes production of new indexes of the data keyed from the copy certificates. Apparently the FFHS have been liaising with the GRO through regular meetings, to try to ensure that family historians gain the maximum possible benefit from the project, and the main improvements that the Federation has been pressing for have now been agreed, which should prove of immense benefit to family history research in the future. Once the new computerised Civil Registration indexes are available, all records in the indexes from the September quarter of 1837 onwards will include:

- (a) age at death for deaths (currently included from the January quarter of 1866);
- (b) mother's maiden name for births (currently included from September quarter of 1911);
- (c) spouse's surname for marriages (currently included from the January quarter of 1912).

## Family History Online

One of the recent technological successes of the Federation has been the development of Family History Online, a service for both family historians and family history societies, of which we have made good use. To continue to benefit fully from this service, however, we need to find someone willing to take over from Judy Excell to take the data sets from the various projects and prepare them for submission to FHOL. There are three obvious requirements - time, database proficiency and an enthusiasm for the project.

## Annual Conference 2006

This year our Annual Conference at Clair Hall, Haywards Heath attracted more attendees than ever before. The main theme of the conference, Family History and the Media, provided three contrasting talks. Nick Barrett gave an extremely entertaining, informative and insightful talk about the impact of television on family history, and in particular *Who do you think you are?* Ed King provided many people with their first introduction to the treasures that can be found at the British Library Newspaper collection at Colindale, and how they are becoming more accessible, whilst Martin Hayes in the lunchtime seminar sessions provided extremely valuable information about what is available locally and how this might be used to advantage. In the afternoon Peter Higginbotham imparted much valuable information about his passion, the Victorian Workhouse.

Throughout the day there was much meeting and conversation, interest in the various stalls and a high level of participation. Outside there was a bitter east wind, which unfortunately did keep the temperature in the hall lower than was desirable, but generally this did not seem to detract from members' enjoyment of the event.

Next year the Annual Conference will again be at Haywards Heath on Saturday 24th March.

## West Meads Coach Trips

West Meads have two coach trips planned in the near future. On 21st April they will be going to the Family Record Centre and on 23rd June to The National Archives at Kew. The latter trip also has an option of visiting the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, which for some people might be a greater attraction than TNA! Both dates are Fridays, the coach will leave West Meads car park at 8 a.m. and seats will cost £8 each. Please contact Jane Upton (01243 263016) for more information and to book.