



SussexLink



February 2005

A Newsletter for the Sussex Family History Group

Vol 3 No 1

Help Please!

In any organisation there will always be change, always be comings and goings, always be opportunities for people to step forward and help. This last year has seen a number of members take on important roles, including the Group Treasurer, the Volunteers Co-ordinator, and key positions in our meeting centres that are essential if they are to keep functioning. But there are always plenty of other opportunities, and Rosie Ansell outlines them elsewhere. I want to draw attention here to just two.

Secretary

Two years ago, when we had no one to take over as Secretary, Margaret Bysh volunteered to do this job for a maximum of three years. Margaret is quite clear that she does not intend to continue in the role beyond the AGM in 2006. We therefore need to find someone to work alongside her over the next twelve months, ready to take over in 2006. The job is primarily about being the central administrator for the Group, maintaining communications both within the Group and with other relevant organisations (FH societies, FFHS, record offices, local study centres, and official bodies such as the Charity Commission). Please, please do not feel reticent about volunteering! Contact me (01444 412790, chairman@sfhg.org.uk) or Margaret (secretary@sfhg.org.uk) and we can talk about how you might be able to help.

Executive Committee Members

Joan Goddard has indicated that she wishes to stand down from the Executive Committee at the AGM in April. Joan has given many years of loyal and devoted service to the Group, both as Secretary and as Vice Chairman, for which we are extremely grateful. A flourishing organisation such as ours needs an effective Executive and at this time of the year I am always looking for new people to come and join us. Again contact me if you would like to discuss what is involved, or simply ask Margaret for a nomination form (and return by 12th March 2005).

Civil Registration Reform

As many readers will know, the government intends to reform the civil registration legislation, and to this end laid before parliament orders concerned with birth and death registration for consideration under the Regulatory Reform legislation. This process enables non controversial administrative changes to be introduced, after proper public consultation and due consideration by committees of both houses of parliament, without the need for new primary legislation. Certain aspects of the civil registration proposals, however, remain controversial, particularly the security of the proposed electronic registration system and the level of access to historic records available to the public. The Federation of Family History Societies has been campaigning vigorously with respect to the latter point, which would deny anyone who is not a close relative access to the address, occupation and cause of death on the grounds of privacy.

The Regulatory Reform Committees of both the

House of Commons and the House of Lords have ruled that the proposals are sufficiently controversial to make it inappropriate for the legislation to be introduced in this way. This presumably means that the GRO will have to wait until there is a window of opportunity in the legislative programme to introduce primary legislation, or so amend the present proposals that they are acceptable to the genealogical and family history community amongst others, and therefore no longer controversial. For the moment, however, it means no change. For further information visit www.ffhs.org.uk/Societies/Liaison/News.htm.

Subscriptions and Standing Orders

60% of members who pay their annual subscription by Standing Order did not amend their instructions to their bank, including your Chairman and Membership Secretary! Please, if you were like us, send the additional £2 (on line at http://www.sfhg.org.uk/renew_onl.html if you wish) and amend your standing order now for next year.

The Keep

Most members familiar with East Sussex Record Office would agree that it is in need of major redevelopment. The search room and main historical archive at the Maltings is hopelessly too small, has very limited public facilities, no access for the disabled to the main search room and no car park. The environmental conditions under which the records are stored also do not come up to modern standards.

For some time now preliminary studies and discussions with potential partner organisations have been taking place which have led to the concept of a new Historical Resource Centre for the county, sometimes referred to as The Keep. Obviously as family historians we will be very interested in this, but we are particularly interested as a Group because one of the potential partners is in fact ourselves. Depending on the final location and the resources that are available, it may be possible for SFHG to have its base in the new centre, providing a long term home for our library and possibly other facilities.

Although this is an exciting prospect which potentially could bring together a number of voluntary, academic and local government organizations with an interest in heritage, I have to stress that this is all some time away and there will be many hours of discussion and planning before this can become a reality.

SFHG Wills Depository

In our research we all come across wills of our ancestors. The Group would like to establish a Wills Depository where members can deposit the terms of wills that they have located during their research. We are looking for wills of Sussex people up until 1900 and would be happy to accept full transcripts. We will then publish a list of the wills that we hold and will supply transcripts when requested, as with the other SFHG services. Copies will also be put in the library. If the response is sufficient we may also publish them on a CD.

Please forward your transcripts, either as a Word document or typed, to:

Rosie Ansell, SFHG Wills Depository
63 Charmouth Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4SF
willstore@sfhg.org.uk

Baptism Index

The Sussex Baptism Index has over 170,000 entries, thanks to the hard work of a very willing band of volunteers. Although encouraging, this is no more than 20% of the total and means that I am often unable to respond to people seeking information. I have therefore developed with Alan Stoner a table on our website of the coverage of the index, showing for which parishes we have records and the number of entries per decade. Please check here before asking for a look up to save disappointment.

Brian Cutler, baptisms@sfhg.org.uk

Volunteering

Volunteering is the lifeblood of any organisation such as ours. Volunteers have produced most of the many publications and indexes available to SFHG members. And the work goes on.

There is a large band of members presently transcribing, recording, checking, and entering information into computer databases, led by a small band of project leaders. You do not need a computer for checking transcriptions.

If poring over records and documents is not your forte perhaps you would like to volunteer to help at meetings. They do not organise themselves and help is needed to put together programmes, run meetings and put up bookstalls. Putting out chairs and helping with refreshments is equally valuable.

Stalls are also provided at outside events, there is the library to run and publicity to organise across the County. Perhaps you have specific skills and could help with the writing of articles for the Journal, running conferences, maintaining the website or managing our library collection.

So don't just sit there - think what you can do to help your fellow members. If you have time to spare and would like to help please complete the questionnaire on the website or write to me, enclosing a sae, and I will post one to you.

Rosie Ansell, Volunteers Co-ordinator
63 Charmouth Road, St Albans, Herts, AL1 4SF
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Beyond BMD

SFHG Annual Conference April 9th

Clair Hall, Haywards Heath

Family history often takes us far beyond the classic genealogical information provided by hatch, match and dispatch into the realm of local history. For our Annual Conference therefore we have engaged Ron Kerridge to tell us about Sussex Tokens, John Farrant to explain how best we can use A2A to explore our Sussex ancestry, John Owen Smith to tell us about the Swing Riots and Rachel Freeman to give two similar workshops on Using Poor Law records.

The conference is again proving popular, so if you intend to come, get on and book now!

Website

For those who like to keep in touch with what is happening, we have changed our Internet Service Provider (ISP) this month. All appears to have gone smoothly and you probably haven't noticed anything different. Many thanks to Alan for making this change happen.

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