

**ORMSKIRK & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 26th MAY 2021**

Honorary Secretary's Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

This report incorporates the principal activities of the Society.

Accommodation

We continue to rent accommodation at the Scout HQ in Wigan Road, Ormskirk, which houses our Library, but have been unable to use them for meetings etc during the past 12 months due to the pandemic.

Membership

Current Membership Total 2020/21 is **137** of which 5 are Free Members
19 new members have joined for 2020/21, 7 members have rejoined for 2020/21
Dig Up Your Roots accounts for 4 of the new members and 3 of the rejoined members & all are members until 01/04/2021) No members have cancelled their membership for 2020/21,
1 members has died during 2020/21
67 members Gift Aided their payments to the Society for 2020. They all have signed Declarations or have consented to Gift Aid via Parish Chest but have not actually signed a Declaration
11 members and 4 Exchange Societies have requested their magazine electronically
Our thanks go once again to Sally Dean for her excellent work in keeping our membership records up to date, and collecting subscriptions and renewal monies.

The Library

Whilst it has been a difficult year in terms of lack of access to the physical resources in the ODFHS library, we have been able to expand the collection through some very interesting donations. This includes books, as well as ephemera such as parish and school magazines, indentures, copies of wills and even a sampler. All donations are very much appreciated.

In order to make the library's resources more accessible to members both near and afar, we are in the process of digitizing suitable material for viewing online and producing indexes to those resources we cannot reproduce. This is an ongoing project, which will complement the physical library and the range of resources the society has for sale.

Many thanks to Kathryn, our Librarian, in collecting and cataloging all the donations we have received, and for storing them at home until we can get back into the Scout Hall.

Publications & Sales

Sales started off very slowly last year but began to pick up once we had our new product list on Parish Chest website in late May. During the year we sold a total of 34 CD's plus a couple of books. Best selling CD was Burscough St. John C of E gravestones and Monumental Inscriptions.

During the year we produced 1 new CD based on Halsall Parish Church and sold 3 copies of that one.

Bill Huyton was in charge of sales and we have to thank him for our new product list and also for introducing delivery of CDs via We Transfer. This was introduced due to the long delays in the postal system and general restriction of the pandemic, but is definitely the way forward.

Our products can be viewed at <http://www.parishchest.com/ormskirk-district-fhs>

Research help

During the past year we have been unable to run any face to face help sessions but have continued to receive request for help with research via Facebook, letter and email, and we do our best to assist in all cases, or redirect them to the most appropriate place. Thanks to all who have assisted with this.

Websites

Over the past year we have made significant improvements in website content and appearance, including ...

Continuing additions to the Gallery and Video Archive pages

Updating the Magazine and Exchange Magazine archives

Re-organization of the CD sales catalogue (Shop page), now with direct links to the Parish Chest site for ease of purchase

Previous production/pagination problems with the online version of the magazine have been resolved so that it is now identical to the print version

Work is now in progress to improve archive content and access for members and guests. This includes...

All CD data files now copied and stored securely on the website server in preparation for digital download options for customers and others. (Thanks to Pam & Kate for file transfers)

Digitization/scanning of library items (ongoing, thanks to Kathryn) to provide backup for archival material and online access for members. See the new Members/Library page to view progress so far.

We are very grateful to Alan Cooper for taking over the website and wish to thank him for all his work and updates to the site.

Boatfamilies website

In the year to April 2021 we again added more than 5,000 people to our main Boatfamilies tree, partly because a connection was finally found with our Canal 5 tree, allowing them to be merged. This leaves the small Canal 10 as our only supplementary tree.

One effect of the pandemic has been to provide family historians with more time for research, and our Pending tray has never been so full. Information has come from around the country and abroad allowing us to expand boatfamilies on the Lancaster Canal, Cheshire, East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire waterways, and in the Midlands where one boatman christened a son Barjona.

Links to Burscough and Wigan occur in many of these updates, details of which are given in the Update History records in the Media/Documents section of our website. A huge thank you to Keith Jenkins for all the work and effort he puts into keeping this fabulous resource up to date.

Magazine

A steady stream of articles from both members and non-members has been received, building up an excellent range of items on all kinds of topics. Between July 2019 and March 2021 (the most recent 'normal' year) 28 features by 16 different contributors were published. Although we were only able to produce 2 editions between October 2020 and March 2021 these still contained 28 features by 17 different contributors. Notable trends include an encouraging number of pre-1800 articles, and new technology is also having an influence, prompting both news items and articles about DNA and family history. Reports on our YouTube talks were printed in Issue 84, and several articles on standby for future editions relate to the period 1550-1800 period. By February, the loss of Don Holt, Kate's mum Mary and Bill Huyton meant that Pam Richardson was the sole remaining proof-reader; soon afterwards Julie Broadbent, Sally Dean and Andrew Scarisbrick volunteered to assist, and their help is much appreciated.

Many thanks to Kate Hurst who does a brilliant job as Editor of our magazine.

Social Media

By 15 May 2021 our Facebook page had 1066 likes, an increase of 988 since 27 May 2020 (the planned date of the 2020 AGM) and 896 on 22 May 2019 (our last in-person AGM). The page continues to receive regular enquiries on a variety of subjects; cemetery and church records, grave searches, a Bible that belonged to Valentine Coupland (eighteenth-century resident of Ormskirk), identifying a house on Halsall Lane, and Tarleton manor court records are some recent examples. During the pandemic, Facebook has also become a vital way to share news from other family history societies. Any links to useful websites that we can share on the page would be gratefully received.

The **YouTube** channel was 4 years old on 31 January 2021, and allowed us to trial an alternative to live talks; to date, nine virtual talks have been created on various themes, with Illegitimacy and the 1918-19 Flu proving the most popular to date. Thanks are due to Stephen Huyton for supplying material for the flu talk, Dot Hawkes for suggesting the renovation of Ormskirk Church as a topic, and the late Bill Huyton for inspiring the Complementary Resources, Dining With Our Ancestors and Unusual Local Records videos. A new video exploring the way people identified themselves before surnames became common is being planned.

The Virtual Really Useful Show in April 2021 offered a reason to update the ODFHS Promotional Film, which was originally made in 2017 to publicise our existence and activities. It is notable that our total number of views has soared from 7937 on 5 April 2020 to 16319 on 15 May 2021.

Kate Hurst wears many hats in our Society and running our Social Media is amongst them. We thank her for all the work and effort she put in on our behalf.

Monthly Meetings

Very sadly, we have not been able to hold any of our planned monthly meetings during the pandemic, but we are hoping to remedy this by holding monthly Zoom meetings for the time being.

The Executive Committee

In a normal year, the Committee meets about 4 times a year to discuss the activities of the Society and formulate plans for the future. But this has been far from a normal year. We have been unable to meet in person, have not been able to hold our Helpdesk at the Library or attend any events, apart from one virtual event organised by the Family History Federation, which took place in November 2020.

The fact that the Committee can't meet at the moment doesn't mean that the work has stopped. There has been a lot of work going on in the background, such as transcribing records for Halsall St. Cuthberts, updating our records for Christ Church Aughton, administering Facebook and adding several talk videos to our YouTube Channel.

During the year we sadly lost Bill Huyton, a long standing Chairman of the Society. Bill led most of our Monumental Inscription projects and produced the resulting CD's. Since his passing we have lost a wealth of technical expertise in this area. At the moment we are looking for someone with the ability to help in this area. Sheila Galligan resigned from the Committee during the year due to family commitments, so we also need someone to make and serve refreshments at our monthly meetings, once they re-commence.

We did welcome 2 new co-opted members onto the Committee, Norma Gregson and Keith Broadbent, during the later half of the year, both of whom are standing to be elected as full members at this AGM.

In November, with no sign of an end to the pandemic, we decided to hold our first Zoom Committee Meeting, which went very well. We were all learning how to use Zoom together and it has worked out very well. So well that we are beginning to use it for our fourth Wednesday of the month members meetings. So far it has been well received with the benefit that it allows members from anywhere in the world to join us (time zones allowing).

I must congratulate the Committee for getting our Society through the last 12 months. Its been a hard year for everyone. A year necessitating change to adapting circumstances.

Lastly, thank you to all our members for your continued support and helping us to keep the Society afloat.

Pam Richardson
22nd May 2021.