

## **Minutes of the Search Room User Group meeting held on Thursday 1 November 2012 in meeting room 2, New Register House at 14:00 Hours**

### **Attendees**

Anne Slater (Head of Public Services), Dee Williams (DW, NRS & chair), Gill Amos (GA, NRS), Alison Lindsay (AL, NRS), Iain Ferguson (IF, NRS), Bruce Bishop (BB, SAFHS), Alison Fordyce (AF, NSS), Lloyd Pitcairn (LP, Genealogist), Val Wilson, (VW, ASGRA & Genealogist), Janet Bishop, ASGRA

### **Apologies:**

Ken Nisbet (Genealogist), Dr Irene O'Brien (IOB, Chair SCA & senior archivist)

### **1. Previous Minutes of 15 August 2012**

1.1 The content of the minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

### **2. Action Update From Last Meeting**

Item 3.2.1 – IF explained that the IT team had managed to make some progress on the ability to view images for other genealogy related websites. However, with such limited resources and competing priorities, staff would not have time to progress this item further. VW confirmed that she now uses her own laptop to give her access to the genealogy related websites.

### **3. Centre Software**

#### **3.1 Planned Enhancements**

3.1.1 The 1902 to 1925 wills and testaments should be released on 6 November on the internet website at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) and at the ScotlandsPeople Centre.

*Dn. This release date was achieved*

3.1.2 Work continues on the 1905 valuation rolls.

3.1.3 IF reported that his staff had stopped adding the mother's maiden name on indexes because a separate project was in progress that will result in some re-indexing of the statutory records and in turn, addition of the mother's maiden name to the indexes. Iain's team is instead working on indexing some Old Parish Registers that have yet to be added to the digitised collection.

#### **3.2 Performance Issues**

3.2.1 GA reported that new code had been released, which had reduced the number of system issues. The IT team was continuing to monitor the system.

3.2.2 GA explained that problems with the replication server had resulted in replacement images not being loaded on to the network but this problem was now sorted and full replication was taking place within around 1 hour. The system had copied across all images that were waiting to be transferred.

## **4. Centre & Historical Search Rooms**

### **4.1 Historical Search Room**

4.1.1 AL confirmed that the Public Survey Quality Group (PSQG) survey would run between the 5 to 16 November.

4.1.2 The questionnaire would cover issues like family history research, economic issues, ancestral tourism and customers. It was hoped that the exercise would highlight any common weaknesses and that an action plan would be introduced to try and address them.

4.1.3 AL highlighted the fact that a member of staff was available to help customers visiting the historical search room.

### **4.2 Centre Search Rooms**

4.2.1 The refurbishment of the external façade of New Register House was underway. Once the works reach the Dundas room, customers will be given the opportunity of being relocated to another search room in General Register House. The accommodation staff were liaising with IF on the programme of works.

4.2.2 The Matheson Dome will close on Friday 30 November. This decision had been taken following lower visitors to the search rooms accompanied by high running costs. The other issue was the fact that the Matheson Dome is a store room for the Sasine records, which have different ambient requirements to a search room. Access to the Reid room from the archivist's garden would be via the ramp on the west side that leads to the corridor between the Reid and Matheson Dome.

4.2.3 BB pointed out that nearly every family history society in Scotland had experienced a decline in memberships. He wondered whether it was reflective of an aging population.

4.2.4 AS was keen to increase the number of digitised records to maintain interest in family history. Interest on the internet did not appear to have declined so possibly the trend was for customers to search from the comfort of their homes.

4.2.5 AS explained how she planned to review the public service strategy, the offerings of the National Records of Scotland and the promotions. AS also wanted to make better use of the Adam Dome.

4.2.6 LP requested that customers who are colleagues and who have booked in together, be seated next to each other to allow them to communicate more easily and quietly. IF was surprised that staff were not already doing this and agreed to remind staff to put customers together if requested.

4.2.7 DW confirmed that there were no plans to introduce an on line seat booking system.

4.2.8 LP asked whether it would be possible for NRS to allow professional researchers to get involved in the family history starter talks that have been

advertised in the ScotlandsPeople newsletter. LP was keen to be able to offer assistance to people starting out their family history research. DW said she would give his request due consideration.

## **5. Local Family History Centres (LFHC) Update**

5.1 Since 4 October 2012, the Heritage Hub at Hawick has been open 2 days a week on a Thursday and Friday.

## **6. Any Other Business**

6.1 Ken Nisbet, who was unable to attend the meeting, had asked whether there were plans to introduce a half day search pass because he believed that it would result in greater visitor numbers. AS confirmed that this proposal would be considered as part of the overview mentioned earlier (see item 4.2.5).

6.2 BB asked the group to note that the next Scottish Association of Scottish Family History Societies (SAFHS) conference would take place on 11 May 2013 at Galasheils.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

7.1 The date of the next meeting was planned for Tuesday 5 February 2012 at 14:00 in meeting room 2, NRH. Being that the meeting rooms in New Register House are booked out that week the meeting will take place on Tuesday 12 February.

**Dee Williams**

12 November 2012