



*British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa*

**2015 Annual Reports**  
**TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**13 JUNE 2015**

**PRESIDENT—BARBARA TOSE**

From my perspective, the past year has been about change. Although we finished our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year with our most successful conference to date and continued to have high attendance at our monthly meetings at Library and Archives Canada, the Board of Directors spent the fall preparing for our move to Ben Franklin Place (BFP) at CentrepoinTE. Fortunately for us, the location of our meetings makes little difference to our members; attendance since January has remained just as active, averaging 180 members per meeting.

Our conference committee for this year has also had to deal with considerable change when the decision to hold this year's conference at BFP had to be made. We anticipate the venue will make little difference once again, and our fall conference will be just as successful as ever.

Our long-time librarian retired this year. Betty Warburton has given many years to BIFHSGO and the library in particular, and we were sorry to have her leave. Our discussions about her replacement, or lack thereof, have led us to broader discussions on the future direction for the library. A sub-committee is exploring all options.

In light of all the changes and our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Board decided to conduct a survey of our members to determine where our strengths lie and where improvements can be made. We were gratified, but not surprised, to reach a 55% return rate and will be using the analysis to set goals and directions for the coming years.

Some things about BIFHSGO don't change, though. We hosted two successful special events during the year. The first, in November and in partnership with Ottawa Branch, OGS, took advantage of British genealogist Kirsty Gray's visit to Toronto—we were fortunate to have her deliver two talks to a packed room at Woodroffe United Church. The second event was a full day of lectures in March given by two staff members of the Ulster Historical Foundation. BIFHSGO was honoured to be the only Canadian stop on their two-week tour of North America, and we were delighted to see people come to the event from across the province, Quebec and as far away as Alberta!

Our members continue to receive great value for their membership through *Anglo-Celtic Roots*, educational and entertaining monthly meetings, continually updated searchable online databases and our overall web presence. This year we added our own YouTube channel to the website, where we have posted several lectures and tutorials of interest to members. We also recently negotiated a 50 per cent discount for our members on a World Deluxe annual membership to *findmypast*.

Members actively participate in our Scottish, DNA and Writers Special Interest Groups, display at the monthly Discovery Tables and share their research through talks and articles. BIFHSGO is a healthy and vibrant society whose strength lies in our volunteer base and the involvement of our members. I have had the privilege to work with a team of dedicated and enthusiastic Directors who ensure the Society runs smoothly. They have made my transition to President easy and I look forward to another year of our working together to make BIFHSGO a receptive, beneficial and relevant family history society.

## **RECORDING SECRETARY—ANNE STERLING**

I am completing my second two-year term as Secretary of BIFHSGO. I attended all Board meetings and of course wrote Minutes and kept copies of reports. I have continued to keep all other records relating to Board business, and to respond to requests from Board members and others. Organizing the “Best Presentation by a Member” voting and creating Awards certificates is part of my role as well.

In February, I enjoyed representing the Society at City Hall on Heritage Day. The next month it was my privilege, along with Willis Burwell, to host/house Gillian Hunt and Fintan Mullan, our all-day speakers from the Ulster Historical Foundation. It was delightful showing them the city sights when ice blocks were going over the Rideau Falls.

It has been a very positive experience to be on the Board of such a productive and active Society. I plan to continue volunteering for BIFHSGO in other capacities.

## **PROGRAM—JANE DOWN**

A few appeals to the membership elicited a number of volunteer speakers (see table below) for the 2014–2015 monthly meetings, which were held at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa, for the September to December meetings and in The Chamber at Ben Franklin Place, 101 Centrepointhe Drive, Ottawa, for the January to June meetings. The Chamber is now our monthly meeting home.

To fill the remaining program slots, we brought in Christine Woodcock from Toronto and Dr. Jonathan Vance from the University of Western Ontario in London. Also, we partnered with the Ottawa Branch, OGS, to bring in Kirsty Gray for two talks in November at a special event. She is from England, but was delivering talks in Toronto and added on a trip to Ottawa at our invitation. The Kirsty Gray lectures were held at Woodroffe United Church.

For March, we booked two speakers, Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt, from the Ulster Historical Foundation. They were on a North American tour and we were able to bring them to Ottawa to deliver six talks. It was arranged to occur on the day of our monthly meeting, so we had the usual two lectures in the morning and then extended the day to the full afternoon with four lectures. It was a very successful day, attracting 264 people to the morning monthly meeting and 216 for the afternoon lectures.

One of our May speakers, Murray Watson, lives in England but was going to be in Ottawa in May and thus arranged to give his talk with Marilyn Barber, so we did not have to pay for his travel expenses.

Each speaker who gave a full talk (not the Great Moment speakers, not Kirsty Gray and not the UHF speakers) received a \$70 honorarium. Also, except for those mentioned above, all out-of-town speakers received assistance with travel expenses. Arrangements for Kirsty Gray were handled by OGS Ottawa Branch. The UHF speakers were given US\$700.

The Saturday morning meetings were, once again, very popular, attracting around 170–225 members and guests.

Besides organizing the monthly program, finding speakers and attending monthly board meetings, the Program Director also collected abstracts of the speakers’ talks and short biographies; posted these on the website; helped put the speakers’ talks on the laptop on the Saturday mornings; and introduced and thanked the speakers at the meetings.

## Monthly Meetings 2014–2015

Date	Speaker	Title of Talk
13 Sept 2014	Christine Woodcock	Preparing for a Research Trip to Scotland
11 Oct 2014	Ann Burns	Assisted Emigration to Escape the Great Famine in Ireland
2 Nov 2014 <b>Special Event</b>	Kirsty Gray	1) Searching for Names: Challenges, Pitfalls and the Downright Ridiculous 2) Solving Problems through Family Reconstruction
8 Nov 2014	Dr. Jonathan Vance	Who Was the Canadian Soldier?
13 Dec 2014 <b>Great Moments</b>	Terry Findlay	Look Where You Step
	Sandra Adams	Henry Shelverton: A Life in Hiding
	Brenda Turner	Going Sideways and What I Found
	Ian Browness	Arthur Edwin—A Lost Brother Rediscovered
10 Jan 2015	Patricia Roberts-Pichette	The Queen's Photographer, the Abyssinian Prince and my Great-Grand-Uncle Charlie
14 Feb 2015	Brenda Turner	Ed's Story
14 Mar 2015 <b>Ulster Historical Foundation Lectures Day</b>	Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt	1) Unique Challenges of Irish Genealogy: Pitfalls and Tricks of the Trade 2) Records Related to the Different Churches in Ireland 3) Census Substitutes and Other Sources for the Early Nineteenth and Eighteenth Century 4) Tracing Farming Families in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century: Using Landed Estate Records 5) Understanding Irish Townlands: The Importance of Place, Identity and Administrative Divisions in Irish Research 6) Solving Your Brick Walls: Practical Internet Tutorial and Resolving Research Problem
11 Apr 2015	Christine Jackson	My Ancestors were All "Ag Labs"—Or Were They?
9 May 2015	Marilyn Barber & Murray Watson	Invisible but Audible: Postwar English Immigrants in Canada
13 June 2015 <b>Great Moments</b>	Ken McKinlay	Misplaced Twigs on a Branch
	John Reid	Tragedy at Sea: How My Family History Nearly Ended Before It Began
	Tara Grant	Elizabeth White, Elizabeth Dwight or Elizabeth Jones? Mother of 39 and My 8-Times Great-Grandmother
	Lesley Anderson	Digging up the Bownes in My Family Tree

## MEMBERSHIP—KATHY WALLACE

The number of memberships and members within the organization was slightly lower in 2014. We had 48 individual new members and 9 new family memberships join during the year (66 members in total). In each year a number of members do not renew, however. In 2014, most individuals/families who took out a half-year membership then also renewed for 2015.

BIFHSGO lifetime member Bernice Severson died 31 Jan 2014. Lifetime member Herbert Hanmer died at age 99 on 30 April 2014. Lifetime member John Starnes died December 23, 2014.

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Membership Summary				Members Summary			
Category	2012	2013	2014	Category	2012	2013	2014
Individual	434	444	424	Individual	434	444	424
Family	83	77	76	Family	166	155	152
Institutions	25	23	22	Institutions	25	23	22
Total	542	544	522	Total	625	622	598

## PUBLICITY—MARY-LOU SIMAC

### Events

BIFHSGO publicity activities were carried out throughout the year at a variety of events, both locally and at more distant venues in Ontario and Quebec. In early June 2014, several members attended the Ontario Genealogical Society's annual conference in Niagara and distributed BIFHSGO annual conference 2014 promotional material. Later in the month, BIFHSGO brochures were available at the annual conference of the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada, held in Toronto.

In late September 2014, BIFHSGO materials and resources were on display at British Home Child Day, held in Athens, Ontario.

In mid-February 2015, BIFHSGO members promoted the society's activities to members of the public, and distributed information about the society at Heritage Day at Ottawa City Hall. This was an excellent opportunity to connect with a good cross-section of the public. Later in the month, BIFHSGO materials were available at the annual general meeting of Cantley 1889, a group dedicated to discovering the early 19th century roots of Cantley, Quebec.

On 27–28 March 2015, BIFHSGO had a display table at the OGS Ottawa Branch's Gene-o-Rama event, held at the Continuing Education Centre on Woodroffe Avenue.

In early May 2015, BIFHSGO brochures were taken to the Montreal Celtic Festival. On 9–10 May, BIFHSGO joined with the Ottawa Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society, and the City of Ottawa Archives to exhibit at the Zoomer Show, a lifestyle expo aimed at visitors aged 45+ held at the Shaw Centre (Ottawa Convention Centre). Over 400 members of the general public stopped by the booth to discuss family history, and pick up information materials. BIFHSGO also exhibited at the OGS 2015 annual conference in Barrie, Ontario, in late May.

### Other Initiatives

(a) The BIFHSGO membership brochure, "Tracing and Sharing British Isles Family History," was updated and reprinted in April 2015, primarily to reflect the change in monthly meeting location from Library and Archives Canada to the City of Ottawa's Ben Franklin Place at CentrepoinTE, as well as the addition of the *findmypast* discounted subscription for members.

(b) Monthly meetings were mainly publicized through:

- flyers for the Fall, Winter and Spring meetings
- "Our Town," *Ottawa Citizen*, on the Thursday immediately preceding the meeting
- the Gaelic Hour Newsletter (CHIN Radio)
- the BIFHSGO website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed
- online event calendars: [OttawaEvents.org](http://OttawaEvents.org); [OttawaStart.com](http://OttawaStart.com), CBC Ottawa Community Calendar, and [Globalgenealogy.com](http://Globalgenealogy.com).

## EDUCATION—MARY DONNELLY

The Before BIFHSGO educational sessions, which have taken place from 13 September 2014 to 9 May 2015, have explored the “How To’s” around genealogical research, journalling and record keeping. We owe our thanks to our membership volunteers who make this timeframe interesting and useful to members.

2014/2015 Before BIFHSGO Education Sessions		
13 Sept 2014	Christine Woodcock	Tracking Your Scottish Immigrant Ancestors
11 Oct 2014	Dr. Nial Keogh	The Importance of the Chaplain to the Catholic Soldiery
8 Nov 2014	Jonathan Vance	A Century Ago: War Comes to Canada
13 Dec 2014	Brian Glenn	Kick Start No. 3 for PowerPoint Presentations
10 Jan 2015	Ken McKinlay	Using Dropbox for Genealogy
14 Feb 2015	Dave Cross	Finding Census Records in <i>Ancestry</i>
14 Mar 2015	Fintain Mullan & Gillian Hunt	Replaced by Ulster Historical Foundation Lecture Day
11 Apr 2015	Bill Arthurs	DNA 101
9 May 2015	Brian Glenn & Kathy Wallace	Member Access to the BIFHSGO Website
13 June 2015	Barbara Tose	Annual General Meeting

## RESEARCH AND PROJECTS—DAVE CROSS

This year we have made available another new resource on our website, the Fegan Homes database, with 3530 records of children brought to Canada. This index to the Fegan Homes settlement records is the result of years of work by John Sayers and his team of volunteers, and we are pleased to make this work available to the public. We anticipate continuing to increase the number of databases over the upcoming year, along with an update to the Middlemore Index.

We have completed the indexing of the journals maintained by various chaplains of the No. 1 Casualty Clearing Station run by the Canadian Army Medical Corps. These journals listed the soldiers who died at the unit, including for many the biographic details that helped identify the soldiers and link them back to their family. We have now commenced adding brief biographies for these soldiers to the BIFHSGO website. With thanks to Sheila Dohoo Faure, I am pleased to report that 32 biographies have already been completed and posted to our site.

We are now ready to begin the transcription of ship advertisements found in newspapers, where members of ships’ passengers have thanked the Captain for a successful voyage. These advertisements, in effect, create ships’ lists during a period of time when few ships’ lists exist. We plan to commence with the *Quebec Mercury* this year.

Discovery Tables continued this year, with many members of our Society volunteering to present information on a topic, thus helping all of our members to learn about various aspects of genealogy. Many thanks to those who took the time to prepare for and share their knowledge at the Discovery Tables, helping to enliven our meetings. Next year we are attempting a focus on various counties in England, Scotland and Ireland; we hope this will build connections among our Society members and provide a new focus of interest at the meetings.

## DIRECTOR AT LARGE—KEN MCKINLAY

This year I was given the task of creating, gathering the responses, and analyzing a survey of the BIFHSGO members. What initially started out as a brief survey expanded out to have a possible 60

questions that covered topics from how long you have been researching to how you felt about the delivery of our program. The survey was opened up to the members on January 27, 2015 and was closed on April 5, 2015. With 313 completed surveys submitted, more than 55% of our membership found the time to answer all those questions.

This year we joined the Society Membership Program with *findmypast*. The primary benefit of joining this program is that BIFHSGO members can get a 50% discount off the annual world subscription at findmypast.com. The world subscription gives access to *findmypast*'s entire online collection of material, including the incredible British Newspapers collection, which spans from 1710 to 1953, and includes thousands of local and regional publications from England, Wales and Scotland. Additionally, the subscription provides access to immigration and naturalization records as well as the Periodical Source Index (PERSI), now exclusively housed at *findmypast*.

It was my pleasure to serve on the board as Director at Large and I look forward to serving another year in my term.

## COMMUNICATIONS—SUSAN DAVIS

We have a team of talented and dedicated volunteers who produce our monthly newsletter and quarterly journal and who maintain our website and social media sites.

Christine Woodcock, our newsletter editor, continued to provide members with the latest news, interesting resources and helpful tips on a monthly basis.

Jean Kitchen, *Anglo-Celtic Roots* editor, and her team of Barbara Tose (layout) and Anne Renwick (proof-reading) produced four more jam-packed journals. They enjoyed an abundance of material this past year as a result of our 20th anniversary writing contest. We continued to print and mail out the issues. We also posted 21 years of *Anglo-Celtic Roots* issues on our website, making all but the most recent four issues (reserved for members only) available to everyone.

Gail Dever, our web manager, kept our website looking fresh. She and a team of volunteers kept the site up to date.

We supported the 2014 conference team's efforts by posting the publicity and registration material, the program, and the speaker handouts, with Brian Glenn handling online registration. Jane Down, Mary Donnelly and Kathy Wallace provided notices of monthly and special interest groups' meetings.

As part of our 20th Anniversary celebrations, we added new searchable databases to our website. There are now two Mrs. Joyce databases: "Women's Emigration" and "Emigration 1906." Dave Cross led a team of volunteers to add more databases and improve on the existing ones. Members wrote biographies for the soldiers and medical personnel in the Canadian Casualty Clearing Station database.

We created our own YouTube Channel and posted lectures and videos on topics of interest.

Ken McKinlay, Christine Woodcock, Dena Palamades, Gail Dever and Mary-Lou Simac kept our various social media channels humming. Marlene Lascelle, a library volunteer, supplied our reading lists.

On average, almost 200 people visit our website daily, and visits increase more than 50 percent shortly before our monthly meetings. The Barnados *Ups and Downs Magazine* tends to be our most popular database; in the first four months of 2015, it was visited almost 1,000 times per month. Our Library collection and Surname Interests are among the most popular sections on the site.

A sincere "thank you" to all who have volunteered your time, energy and creativity to keeping our members informed and involved.