



British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa

2016 Annual Reports
TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
11 JUNE 2016

PRESIDENT—BARBARA TOSE

As my second year as President draws to a close, I am pleased to note the changes we have implemented over the past year. We have been in our new “digs” at Ben Franklin Place for over a year now, and it would appear that location is not part of the equation for most of our members attending the monthly meetings. The number of attendees at each meeting still averages around 175 and Jane Down continues to bring us an excellent program.

I am gratified to see that our membership base remains stable and, although we lose some members every year, we seem to gain new ones to balance that out. One advance made in this area was the adoption of the Conference Event Management system so members can renew and pay for memberships online.

Our Conference Planning Committee members now have one conference at BFP under their belts and they are busily planning this year’s event. They had a steep learning curve last year in the new venue but most problems have been solved. Space is still an issue, simply because there isn’t quite enough for our needs. And so the Committee has made the decision to return to two themes instead of the more ambitious three of the last two years. Still, they have another stellar program planned for this fall.

Over the past year the Board reached the decision to donate our library holdings to the Ottawa Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society. This was not an easy step; nor was it taken lightly. However, changing circumstances and the level of use have convinced us that this route is the best one. We will still have some input into the OB-OGS library at the City of Ottawa Archives, and our members are welcome to use the collection during their open hours or to volunteer with their librarian, Grace Lewis. I know that Grace and the OB-OGS will provide our collection with a fine home and our members with excellent service.

The survey of members last year has prompted a number of other actions. We have established an Outreach Committee that is currently exploring ways to bring monthly meeting talks to our distant members and those unable to attend. They are also looking at ways to connect members in discussions about their research problems and solutions. Although we haven’t implemented either of these initiatives yet, they are in the works and I hope that fall will see some visible progress to members. This is in addition to our stellar website and the other social media maintained by our active communications team.

It was clear from our survey that members were keen to have more educational opportunities and so, for the first time in quite a number of years, BIFHSGO held a workshop in March of this year. James F.S. Thomson taught a full-day, hands-on workshop on “Maps and Mapping for 21st Century Genealogists” in one of the computer labs at Algonquin College. Enrollment had to be limited to 50 due to the class size, but the event sold out quickly, and participants were not disappointed. We are hoping to run this workshop again in the fall of 2016 and something different next spring. It is the Board’s hope that we can offer two workshops per year to our members.

Our databases continue to be well used and, although we have only had one update this year, several more are in progress. The British Home Children Deaths database recently doubled the number of records to 4,204 and increased the number of fields by 3. The updates are the result of continued work by John Sayers and his team. Sheila Faure continues to coordinate the researching, writing and posting of biographies for the soldiers who died at No. 1 Casualty Clearing Station.

We have also expanded our Discovery Tables to now, on occasion, include vendors, staff from the Ottawa Public Library and members with genealogical items to sell or give away. We continue to have members bring parts of their collections, focused on a theme, to share with others. These tables prove as popular as the other portions of our monthly meetings.

BIFHSGO has also participated in community events this year to help promote our organization and genealogy in general: Scottish Hogmanay, Heritage Day and the St. Patrick's Day parade, to name a few. We also had a presence at the OGS Conference in Barrie and Ottawa's Gene-O-Rama. And in addition to other social media like Facebook and Twitter, this year we expanded our activities to Pinterest.

We continue to have an active volunteer base that keeps all our activities running smoothly, though I sometimes feel like I'm constantly making an appeal for volunteers of one shape or another. It is astounding how many people it takes to run an organization like BIFHSGO and I am so appreciative of every person who joins with us to make things happen.

This year we are losing from our executive two members, Susan Davis (Communications) and Marnie McCall (Treasurer), who have contributed so much over the past 6 years and with whom I have enjoyed working during my time as President. It was wonderful having their support and experience to rely on and they will be missed. However, the rest of the Executive remains and I know that others will come forward who will continue the long tradition of making BIFHSGO the wonderful, vibrant organization that it is.

RECORDING SECRETARY—GILLIAN LEITCH

And so ends my first year as Secretary, and it has been both a privilege and a pleasure!

My job is to prepare agendas for the monthly Board meetings, keeping in mind the timelines to be met for events during the season. Minutes from the previous Board month are taken, then distributed by email to the Board members, before each meeting. Paper and electronic files of the Society's activities, reports and correspondence are maintained by me. Although all Board members have their own records, I will keep copies of all the generated material, which can be accessed easily. If someone asks for information I am therefore able to help. I am also responsible for the readying of the annual awards presented in June, including the notification of award recipients.

PROGRAM—JANE DOWN

A few appeals to the membership produced the following slate of speakers (see table below) for the 2015–2016 Saturday morning monthly meetings, which were held in The Chamber at Ben Franklin Place, 101 Centrepointe Drive, Nepean. Jane MacNamara came from Toronto to give a talk at the April meeting. Each speaker that gave a full talk (not Great Moments speakers) received a \$70 honorarium, and Jane MacNamara a \$175 honorarium. Jane also received assistance with travel expenses to and from Ottawa. The Saturday morning meetings were, once again, very popular, attracting around 150–170 people to the meetings.

Date	Speaker(s)	Title of Talk(s)
12 Sept 2015	Brooke Broadbent	The Life and Times of Nursing Sister Laura Gamble
10 Oct 2015	John Reid	Did DNA Prove the Skeleton under the Leicester Car Park was Richard III?
14 Nov 2015	Patty McGregor	The George Gallie Nasmith World War I Letters
12 Dec 2015 Great Moments	Ken McKinlay	Esther's Lost Surname
	Duncan Monkhouse	Elizabeth Ann Foster—Where Did You Come From? Where Did You Go?
	Gillian Leitch	Bumping into WC Leitch—or How to Succeed at Research Without Trying
	John McConkey	My Sea-faring Ancestors
9 Jan 2016	David Cross	They Got Their Man
13 Feb 2016	Gail Roger	A Scandal in Battersea
12 Mar 2016	John McConkey	Research Trips to Northern Ireland
9 April 2016	Jane MacNamara	The Search for Alban Leaf
14 May 2016	Roy Thomas	No Irish Country Doctor!
10 June 2016 Great Moments	Brian Glenn	Stories Behind Glass Plate Photographs of the Great War
	Ian McKelvie	Who's Your Great-Great Granddaddy?
	Leanne Cooper	Preachers and Politicians
	Janet Dowdall	Blame It on My Husband

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. The Program Director also worked on the Library Committee; a full report on the Library with recommendations was submitted to the Board in 2015.

MEMBERSHIP—KATHY WALLACE

Membership Summary

Members Summary

Category	2013	2014	2015		Category	2013	2014	2015
Individual	444	424	440		Individual	444	424	440
Family	77	76	82		Family	155	152	164
Institutions	24	22	24		Institutions	23	22	24
Total	544	522	546		Total	622	598	628

The number of memberships and members within the organization increased slightly in 2015. We had 64 individual new members and 9 new family memberships join during the year (73 members in total). In each year a number of members do not renew however. In 2015, we had an increase in individuals / families who took out a half year membership with the conference. Not all may renew for 2016.

BIFHSGO lifetime members John Starnes in Feb 2015 and Dr. David Roger died in June. Member Robert Woodland also died in June.

In the fall of 2015 BIFHSGO adapted the Conference Event Management System so that non-members could apply to join online and so that Membership could accept payments electronically. The response has been very good; 93 members used the online system in the last two months of 2015. About half of the conference attendees renewed memberships with their conference registrations and more than 80% of registrations were also done online.

PUBLICITY—MARY-LOU SIMAC

Events

In early June 2015, BIFHSGO had a display table at the Ontario Genealogical Society's annual conference in Barrie, ON. This was an opportunity to promote our 2015 annual conference, as well as society activities in general. Later in June, BIFHSGO information was available at the LDS Ottawa Stake's annual "Voices from the Dust" family history event. In late September, BIFHSGO materials and resources were on display at British Home Child Day, held in Brockville, Ontario.

On New Year's Eve 2015, BIFHSGO participated for the first time in the Scottish Society of Ottawa's annual Hogmanay celebration in the Aberdeen Pavilion at Lansdowne Park. Several BIFHSGO members staffed our display table from 4 p.m. to midnight, and spoke with dozens of members of the public about family history. It was an excellent opportunity to interact with the general public, many of whom had roots in the British Isles.

In mid-February 2016, BIFHSGO members promoted the society's activities to members of the public and distributed information about the Society at the Heritage Day event in Ottawa City Hall. Despite the record 51 cm snowfall that day, it was a good opportunity to connect with the public, and to touch base with other heritage societies.

On 19 March 2016, BIFHSGO members marched in bright sunshine and bracing temperatures, in the Irish Society of Ottawa's St. Patrick's Day Parade. The main purpose of BIFHSGO's participation was to promote the Irish family history theme of the September 2016 annual conference. This is a community event and it provides an opportunity for increased visibility for the society in the eyes of the general public. BIFHSGO business cards are distributed to spectators along the route. The parade is recorded for next-day local broadcast by Rogers TV.

On 2 April 2016, BIFHSGO had a display table at the OGS Ottawa Branch's Gene-O-Rama event, held at the Continuing Education Centre on Woodroffe Avenue.

Other Initiatives

(a) BIFHSGO is now on Pinterest. Family history-related topics of interest to members are "pinned."

(b) Monthly meetings were publicized by means of:

- flyers for the Fall, Winter and Spring meetings;
- notices in "Our Town," in *The 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; OttawaStart.com, CBC Ottawa Community Calendar, CHOO/COPO, and Global Genealogy.com; and
- new this year: Occasional recorded community service announcements on CBC Radio Ottawa, 91.5, "In Town and Out" program, Saturday mornings.

EDUCATION—KARIN KEYES ENDEMANN

Over the last year, the Education portfolio organized Before BIFHSGO talks, as follows:

Proudly She Served: Researching Canadian Nurses in the Great War	Glenn Wright
Exploring Findmypast.com	Ken McKinlay
Ancestors with Unknown Military Service	Terry Findley
Parish Records: a Resource for Family Historians	Gloria Tubman
Tips for Making The Most of Your UK Family Research Trip	Dena Palamedes
Family Tree Maker is Defunct—What Do I Do Now!	Rick Roberts
Top Ten Tips for Genetic Genealogy	John Reid
Just a Click Away: Using Online Resources for Family History Research	Glenn Wright
Skimming the Surface of British Merchant Marine Records: Ships, Masters, Mates and Crew Agreements	Barbara Tose

These talks were well attended and well appreciated. Many thanks go to Jane Down for filling in for me while I was taking the sun in Florida!

On 5 March 2016 the Board undertook a new venture, organizing a hands-on workshop entitled "Maps and Mapping for 21st Century Genealogists." The speaker was James F. S. Thomson, a Toronto genealogist and instructor with over 30 years of experience in family and local history. More than 50 BIFHSGO members attended the event held at Algonquin Collage. The cost to participants was \$60, including computer facilities, lunch and refreshment breaks. A modest profit was achieved and all the feedback about the course was extremely positive. We are hoping to repeat the workshop this fall.

Thanks to all those who helped to organize the workshop. A special thank you goes to volunteer Brad Pizzati, who provided our on-site technical support.

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS—DAVE CROSS

The only update to our databases this year is a recent one to the Home Children Deaths index. This nearly doubles the number of records available and adds three more fields of information. The update is the result of years of work by John Sayers and his team of volunteers; it helps not just BIFHSGO members but descendants of Home Children around the world. There are several other databases that are progressing and we hope to have new postings for them in the latter part of this year. We also have some interesting databases in the works for next year.

Last year we 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 and link the soldiers back to their families. We have continued adding brief biographies to our site for these soldiers. With the much-appreciated help of Sheila Faure, I am pleased to report that over 180 biographies have already been completed and added to the site.

Discovery Tables continued this year, with many members of our club volunteering to present on a topic and in so doing helping all of our club members to learn and inquire into various aspects of

genealogy. Many thanks go to those who took the time to prepare and share at the Discovery Tables, helping to create more vibrancy at our meetings.

COMMUNICATIONS—SUSAN DAVIS

“Many questions still need to be answered about this part of my family and how they lived. Nonetheless, the facts I have discovered so far are exciting to me. Finally, I have solved a long-term mystery and have removed a couple of chinks from the Irish wall that is my family’s past.”

Lynne Willoughby, “The McGirrs of Castlederg,” *Anglo-Celtic Roots*, Volume 21, Number 2, Summer 2015, p 27.

The words Lynne Willoughby used to conclude her article likely capture the way many members feel about their research—excitement about the discoveries and mystery-solving moments. By writing and submitting her article for publication in our quarterly journal, she recorded a compelling story of what she found and shared her research process and sources with us.

Jean Kitchen, editor, and Barbara Tose, layout editor, guided many members through the publishing process to produce four must-read issues. We continued to print and mail the journal, and its past issues are available on the “Members’ Only” section of our website. Thank you, Jean, Barbara and to all the contributors.

“THESE TWO. These two women learned of the conference through an ad in *Internet Genealogy*. They came all the way from Iowa to join the conference, to learn and to network. Their experience got off to a rocky start. Their flight from Chicago was CANCELLED because of weather. This, unfortunately, made them late for the Friday seminars, but the travel glitch certainly didn’t dampen their spirit!”

This caption appeared next to a photo in the October 2015 newsletter, which was filled with many photos from our annual conference. Our monthly newsletter, delivered to members via email, provided a mix of information and entertainment. Back copies of it are also available in the “Members’ Only” section of our website.

Christine Woodcock stepped down as newsletter editor and Lisa-Dawn Crawley took over the role. Thank you, Christine, for the many great issues you produced!

“The British Women’s Emigration Association database contains the names of almost 600 women who came to Canada in the early 20th century.” This description, featured on our website’s homepage, links to a Women’s Emigration database on the site.

Gail Dever once again led the effort to keep our site up to date and interesting. A team of volunteers worked behind the scenes on various parts of the site. Thank you to each and every one of you who have contributed to its professional look.

Our social media channels continued to grow. Thank you to two key contributors to the social media accounts, Ken McKinlay on Twitter and Christine Woodcock on Facebook. Your support certainly kept these channels interesting! Again a team of volunteers worked behind the scenes on all of our channels and a thank you goes out to each of you. In the spring, Lisa-Dawn Crawley and Anne Moralejo took on coordinator roles for these channels.

So, after six years in the role of Director, I am stepping down. Anne Moralejo began shadowing me in the winter and brings lots of communications experience to the role. Thank you, thank you, thank you to all those I have worked with over these years. It’s been lots of fun!

A quote from Helen Keller sums it up for me, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”