

**MINUTES OF THE TRUSTEES MEETING
HELD AT MEA HOUSE
ON TUESDAY 9 JANUARY 2024 AT 2PM**

PRESENT: Douglas Burdon (Chairman), Niamh Cunningham, John Ward, Kevin Johnson, Joyce Jackman, Richard Calasca, Michael Murphy, John Heckels, Rhoda Lee, Christine Hanley (Tynedale Branch), Dennis Heckels

APOLOGIES: Ann Franklin, Julie Hewitt, Liz Brooks, John Harrison, Carol Trinder

1.1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (14.11.23)

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 14 November 2023 were accepted as a true record – proposed by Joyce Jackman, seconded by John Ward and signed by the Chairman Douglas Burdon.

1.2 MATTERS ARISING – RELATING TO ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

1.3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman has received several items of correspondence being St Margaret's churchyard in Durham is to be cleared and volunteers are required to assist in carrying out this task. When this is completed, it should enable the many inscriptions that were not previously accessible to be photographed. St Nicholas cemetery in Durham has been cleared and additional headstones can now be recorded.

Post 1858 Wills are to be scanned and it is proposed to dispose of the originals. The Society has been invited to comment on this to the FHF which is compiling a response to the consultation. The consensus was that the quality of the scanning of each document and its completeness should be verified before originals are disposed of.

1.4 PROGRESS REPORT ON NEGOTIATION OF NEW LEASE

There have been no further developments since reported at the November Trustees meeting

1.5 WEBSITE SECURITY

The former Webmaster commented in his report on the need for improved website security. Transcendit have been approached for their advice on this. No reply has yet been received and the Treasurer is to contact them. The alternative would be to wait until a new website is completed with improved security.

1.6 TEAM LEADERS

The Chairman has distributed to the Trustees the list of Team Leaders, including the names of those responsible for various actions.

1.7 50th ANNIVERSARY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Due to the re-location, it was decided to defer this matter to a later meeting. Provisional dates of either the 7th or 14th June 2025 were suggested for a conference, with subject and venue to be arranged.

1.8 SECRETARY'S REPORT

Total attendances for 2023 were 1474, of whom 1106 (74.9%) were volunteers compared to 2022 when attendances were 1558 of whom 1150 (73.8%) were volunteers.

Research requests for 2023 totalled 123 via email and 12 by post, compared to 2022 when there were 179 requests by email and 5 by post.

There was a discussion concerning the Charity Commission website on the difficulties being encountered in navigating the website, and the need for individual Trustees to set up a personal account. Richard Calasca is willing to take over the duties in connection with the Charity Commission.

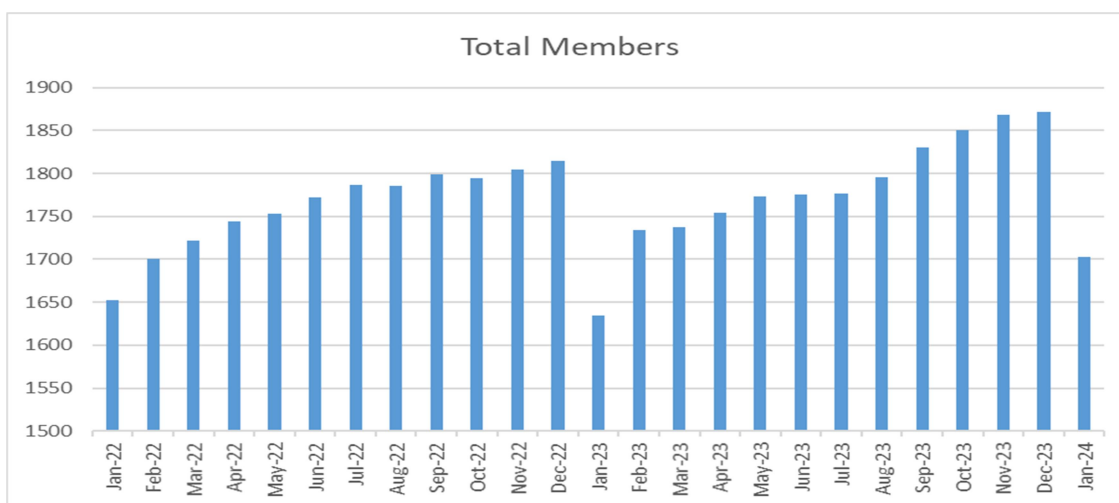
1.9 TREASURER'S REPORT

Subsequent to the meeting, the Treasurer has had the opportunity to complete the Income & Expenditure and the Sales & Royalties accounts as at 31 December 2023 and these are attached.

1.10 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Membership on 1st January 2024

| Membership Type | Journal Delivered By | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----|-------|------|------|-------|------------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-------------|
| | eMail | | | Post | | | Collection | | N/A | | | Grand Total |
| | O/S | UK | Total | O/S | UK | Total | UK | Total | O/S | UK | Total | |
| Additional | | | | | | | | | 4 | 96 | 100 | 100 |
| Complimentary | 1 | | 1 | | 9 | 9 | | | | | | 10 |
| Exchange | 3 | 3 | 6 | | | | | | | | | 6 |
| Individual | 137 | 427 | 564 | 64 | 942 | 1006 | 2 | 2 | | | | 1572 |
| Institutions | 1 | | 1 | 4 | 1 | 5 | | | | | | 6 |
| Lifetime | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 6 | 6 | 1 | 1 | | | | 9 |
| Grand Total | 143 | 431 | 574 | 68 | 958 | 1026 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 96 | 100 | 1703 |
| Grand Total Last Month | 142 | 445 | 587 | 72 | 1097 | 1169 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 109 | 113 | 1872 |
| Grand Total Last Year | 112 | 340 | 452 | 70 | 1002 | 1072 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 106 | 108 | 1635 |



In December 2023

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| New Members Joined | 12 + 1 additional |
| Renewals | 237 + 12 additional |
| Members did not renew | 179 + 16 additional |
| Passed Away | 1 |

| Membership Expired | Letters Sent | Renewed |
|---|--------------|---------|
| Jan – Dec 2019 (Change of NDFHS Address) | 192 | 9 |
| Jan – Dec 2020 | 165 | 58 |
| Jan – Dec 2021 | 137 | 45 |
| Jan – Dec 2022 | 206 | 69 |
| January 2023 | 23 | 6 |
| February 2023 | 31 | 13 |
| March 2023 | 20 | 5 |
| April 2023 | 19 | 10 |
| May 2023 | 20 | 12 |
| June 2023 | 23 | 8 |
| July 2023 | 10 | 2 |
| August 2023 | 7 | 1 |
| September 2023 | 10 | 1 |
| October 2023 | 2 | 0 |
| November 2023 * | 8 | |

*It is proposed to send November reminders together with the December reminders at the start of February.

“North East Roots” chats on 13th Dec on “Border Reiver Ancestry” was attended by 56 members plus 87 members viewed the video and 18th Dec “The interwar years on Tyneside” was attended by 26 members plus 24 members viewed the video - all talks done via Zoom. January chats will be 10th Jan– “The Downies of Glen Isla and Northumberland” and 15th Jan – “Faraday, Frankenstein & Feminism: where family history and traditional history intersect”.

1.11 EDITORS REPORT

The Editor reported an increase in the number of articles submitted for publication in the Journal.

1.12 NDFHS WEBSITE/IT

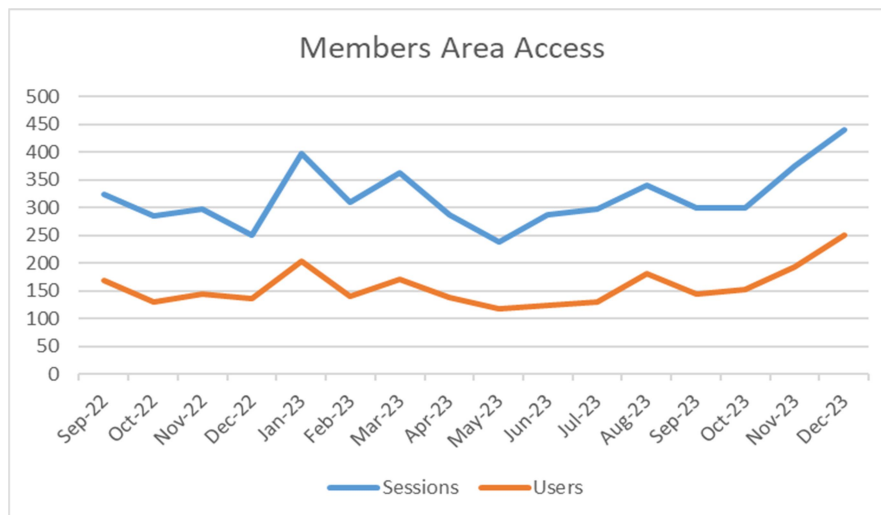
Visitors to NDFHS Domains in December

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a on*

| Month | Oct-23 | | Nov-23 | | Dec-23 | |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| No Of Days | 31 | | 30 | | 31 | |
| Domain | Total | Per Day | Total | Per Day | Total | Per Day |
| ancestral-indexes.co.uk | 675 | 21.77 | 675 | 21.77 | 1007 | 32.48 |
| Autodiscover.ndfhs.org | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| ndfhs.co | 193 | 6.23 | 193 | 6.23 | 150 | 4.84 |
| ndfhs.co.uk | 468 | 15.10 | 468 | 15.10 | 406 | 13.10 |
| ndfhs.com | 312 | 10.06 | 312 | 10.06 | 365 | 11.77 |
| ndfhs.info | 236 | 7.61 | 236 | 7.61 | 311 | 10.03 |
| ndfhs.net | 476 | 15.35 | 476 | 15.35 | 542 | 17.48 |
| ndfhs.org | 2586 | 83.42 | 2586 | 83.42 | 1691 | 54.55 |
| ndfhs.org.uk | 4168 | 134.45 | 4168 | 134.45 | 16763 | 540.74 |
| original-indexes.co.uk | 217 | 7.00 | 217 | 7.00 | 203 | 6.55 |

the Society's Website

| Month | Sessions | Individual Users |
|--------|----------|------------------|
| Jan-23 | 398 | 203 |
| Feb-23 | 309 | 141 |
| Mar-23 | 362 | 170 |
| Apr-23 | 288 | 138 |
| May-23 | 239 | 117 |
| Jun-23 | 287 | 124 |
| Jul-23 | 297 | 131 |
| Aug-23 | 340 | 181 |
| Sep-23 | 299 | 144 |
| Oct-23 | 299 | 152 |
| Nov-23 | 375 | 194 |
| Dec-23 | 439 | 250 |



The number of Facebook users in the private group is 548.

Migration to MS365 - All officer's folders have been migrated and are in use. The solution to the issue of scanning on the Olivetti printer and putting the image into the cloud has been implemented. Work is continuing with the tasks required to finalize the switch over to Microsoft 365 and decommissioning the MEA House server.

A draft Social Media document had been distributed but as this matter is complicated, discussion has been deferred until the next meeting.

1.13 OFFICER REPORTS

a. LIBRARY

Nothing to report.

b. VOLUNTEERS

The availability of volunteers to cover the Search Room was discussed.

c. PROJECTS

Nothing to report.

d. PUBLICITY

The Publicity Officer mentioned the possibility of the Society getting a 5 minute slot on BBC Look North.

e. EVENTS

Forthcoming events: Saturday 25 May 2024 Newcastle Library and Saturday 22 June 2024 York Family History Fair.

1.14 JOB DESCRIPTION – MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

There have been minor amendments to the Membership Secretary's Job Description which had been circulated to the Trustees.

1.15 BRANCH REPORTS – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

BELMONT (DURHAM)

The meeting on 15 November 2023 attended by 14 members and 4 guests when the guest speaker was George Nairn, a “deltiologist” (collector of postcards). He selected from his extensive collection a series of views which took members on a journey down the River Wear from its beginning near Wearhead, the confluence of the Killhope & Burnhope burns, to its outfall at Wearmouth, Sunderland. He acknowledged the enthusiasts who documented their region and the specialist firms who produced the images. As many of the images were of family groups, he explained that people would commission the photographs to send to relatives celebrating important family events. In essence, postcards were equivalent of today’s “selfies” and emails. The talk induced many reminiscences and was thoroughly enjoyed by members.

The Chairman gave an update to the members on the search for new premises for the Society and that a Publicity officer has been appointed. Several members brought in items including books, maps and research materials which were enthusiastically admired by the other members. The Chairman reported that he had received a close Y-DNA match with a distant cousin sharing the same surname, confirming that two branches of the family were indeed related

Report of the meeting held 20 December 2023 which was attended by 6 members and 1 guest. The meeting took the form of a members’ forum when Members presented a wide range of different aspects of their family history research resulting in much discussion. All agreed that it was an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. The chairman commented that the low attendance was undoubtedly due the closeness to Christmas but this was still disappointing since members had previously agreed not to move the meeting to a week earlier, as we had done in previous years.

BLYTH

Blyth branch report for meeting held on Tuesday 21st November. We had 23 present with some new faces which was good to see. Brian Godfrey gave a presentation of old photographs and postcards of Blyth. This had everyone remembering past events and old buildings which no longer exists.

Meeting held on Tuesday 19th December, Blyth branch. We had 14 members present and everyone enjoyed Alison's funny stories. Our buffet was next and then we had our knowledge tested with a quiz, which got everybody talking.

CONSETT

The meeting on the 4 November was attended by 11 members/guests, with apologies being received from the Acting Secretary. No update was available regarding a change of date/time and no volunteers for admin support. Tony Patterson gave an excellent presentation on his Patterson ancestors and their pottery in the Gateshead area. This included fascinating details of Tony’s quest to trace pieces of pottery made by his family, a search which has taken him all over the country and includes global purchases. Tony brought a number of pieces of his pottery for us to look at and copies of his book were on sale. Tony’s passion for his subject was clearly evident in his presentation.

Branch Meeting 12 December 2023 attended by 5 people plus 3 apologies. The possibility of alternative venues was discussed and it is proposed these will be investigated. The Acting Branch Secretary has stepped down as she is currently overseas. The meeting expressed its

thanks for all her efforts in setting up the Consett Branch. The Acting Chairman said that she is unable to run the Branch without assistance and at least 2 volunteers are required to play an active role in running the branch. As yet no programme has been arranged for 2024 and no meeting will take place in January, as this was always the plan due to the Consett weather. Those present were asked to consider whether or not they could get involved in running the branch and the contact list is to be emailed for volunteers to come forward, the Deadline being Friday 12 January 2024. If no volunteers are forthcoming, then the Branch will regretfully be terminated.

The meeting consisted of a Members Forum when a good discussion was held regarding various aspects of family history, in particular the various ways to store and record/display the results of one's family history research to share with family members. This was considered as a good subject for a future meeting with members sharing what they have done with their research. A number of websites for future research were shared.

LONDON

On the 4 November, 7 members and a guest gathered together to enjoy a lively, absorbing and extremely informative presentation by Kim Bibby Wilson the theme of which was 'Aspects of Northumbrian Life and Heritage'. The talk commenced with the concept of Northumbrian identity, and Kim went on to explain the ancient roots of the Northumbrian language and dialect as well as introducing us to a range of Northumbrian poetry, prose and song by local poets, writers and musicians. We learned about musical, dance and other traditions which have been kept alive by individuals, families and communities across the region, from the countryside to the coast. The talk concluded with Kim playing the Northumbrian pipes, and her daughter impressed us with her clog dancing.

Our next meeting will be held on 9 March 2024 when Dr Winifred Stokes will make a return visit to speak about the links between agriculture and industrial development in the North-East.

NEWCASTLE

Meeting held on 1 November 2023: Present 14 members plus 1 apology. This month's talk was Rhubarb and Mustard given by Monica Goldfinch, who began by showing a recent photograph of Gosforth Central Park, established in 1923. She went on to explain how the park was on the site of a nursery with the crop with the highest value had been rhubarb. Having a fascinating history, rhubarb was imported from China and Russia into Europe in the 14th century. Growing rhubarb successfully in England was difficult until, in 1817, a process of forcing rhubarb was discovered at Chelsea Physic Garden.

Durham was once synonymous with mustard. In 1720 a Mrs Clements discovered that grinding mustard seeds like flour produced a stronger flavour than crushing them. The mustard's popularity grew as Mrs Clements toured the country taking orders. It proved impossible to keep the recipe secret and Durham eventually lost its monopoly.

Monica's presentation with its wealth of detail and illustration, offered something of interest for everyone: local, national and family history, and nostalgia for all who remembered the stewed rhubarb and custard (not mustard) of their childhood.

No meeting December – Christmas Lunch

NORTH TYNESIDE

November was our members forum, which was well attended. The Branch Secretary delivered a short power presentation entitled A Day at the Seaside which featured a number of pictures of old Whitley Bay/Cullercoats/ Tynemouth. Our members were asked to bring along old photos of their family at the beach and shared lots of memories of holidays spent at the coast.

This will be our last meeting at North Shields library. There will be no meeting in January 2024, and from February our new location will be in Whitley Bay library. Meetings will continue to be on the first Tuesday of each month at 1.30pm.

No meeting December – Christmas Lunch.

SOUTH TYNESIDE

We had 11 members attend the meeting on 15th November plus 3 apologies, when the Branch Secretary gave a presentation entitled “The Stowaway”. A literal ‘find in the attic’ lead Ann to research the life of Edith Williams, a young English woman who she stowed away on a Swedish windjammer, the ‘C.B. Pederson’ and the mysterious link to Ann’s father from his days as a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy.

It was decided not to hold a formal meeting on the 13 December, 9 members (+ 2 apologies) came along to the café in The Word for a ‘cuppa and a chat’ mainly involving family history.

TYNEDALE

Group meeting held on the 9 November 2023 was attended by 8 members and was a Members’ Forum ‘An Eccentric Ancestor or other family Member’. What seemed, on the face of it, to be an interesting topic for discussion had actually proved to be quite a challenge since many of us did not have particularly eccentric ancestors. Several members had identified recent ancestors whom they had known and who had been extremely superstitious. Other ancestors discussed were an 8th Great Grandfather who had travelled on the Mayflower to America, having previously been part of the failed Jamestown settlement, a letter written to a grandfather by his older step-brother on the occasion of the former’s marriage in 1910 which was extremely disparaging of marriage as an institution and also finding a family member through Ancestry DNA who had left Helmsley in the 1830s to set up a farm in Ontario and another who had left his life as a brass founder in Birmingham in the early 1840s to embark on an overland trek to Utah as a farmer and a part of the Mormon community around Salt Lake City.

No meeting December – Christmas meal.

WANSBECK

The meeting on 1 November 2023 was attended by 19 members plus 6 apologies. Business discussed included News from headquarters, Information about Morpeth Literary Festival 2024 and a presentation to manager of Bomarsund & Stakeford Welfare on the occasion of her retirement.

Members then has a most interesting, well organised talk and interactive session entitled, Children's Street Games & Rhymes, was led by Michael Murphy.

The attendance at the meeting on the 6th December was 19 with 6 apologies. The Chairman updated the group on the move of NDFHS headquarters which it is hoped will be in the Spring of 2024 followed by a short talk given by Phyllis McGraw about curious Xmas facts, followed by a Xmas related group activity and Xmas quiz.

1.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

1.17 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 12th March 2024 at 2pm in MEA House.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 16.15 pm.

Signed as a correct record:

Date: