



British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa

2021–2022 Annual Reports
TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
JUNE 11, 2022

President (Duncan Monkhouse)

This has been a “more-of-the-same” year as COVID continues to impact the Society and its operations—some good and some bad. Our excellent program of presentations continues to draw on average 150 people per month to our virtual meetings. Our membership, while dropping in the last couple of years, is still near 500 and now comes from a broader geographical area. Our special interest groups—Colonial British America, DNA and Writing—are strong and well supported by the volunteers who organize them. They continue to grow showing an expanded interest in these specialized areas of our genealogical research. Unfortunately, our Scottish SIG has been suspended since the coordinators retired and no one has come forward to run the group

Conference

The 2021 BIFHSGO conference, *Irish Lines and Female Finds*, was an unparalleled success with over 430 attendees. There were 19 sessions with half the speakers from Ireland. The response to the new format was excellent and will be repeated this year. Please see the BIFHSGO website for information and to register for this year’s conference, *England and Wales: at home and on the move*.

Board

It has been a very challenging year for the Board. We have continued to be impacted by external events, such as COVID and website renewal, and internally by the lack of directors. Ann Burns has done an excellent job as membership director, despite the added complications from the implementation of the new membership database on the new website. However, she has decided not to continue at the end of her two year term. Thank-you Ann for all your hard work and assistance through what has been a difficult time for the membership director.

Website (Sheila Faure)

In December 2020, the company hosting our former BIFHSGO website announced it would be going out of business in mid-2021.

At that point, the process for developing a new website began. A small website committee was struck and I would like to thank those committee members for their ongoing support during the following nine months. A temporary website was created to promote the 2021 conference and then attention turned to developing a new permanent website.

Specifications for the site were developed, based on input from a range of BIFHSGO leaders, and approved by the Board. They were sent to a number of web development companies in May 2021. A company was selected, and work began on the development of the website in the summer. The key goal was to have a clean, modern, welcoming site for both BIFHSGO members and non-members; we wanted a way to provide useful information that was easy to find for all audiences; and we desired a site that would facilitate the work of our volunteers and facilitate members joining and renewing. The site was developed and tested over the summer of 2021, with a launch in September.

The new website allows us to promote our events, quarterly journal, research indexes (with the exception of the surname database) and research guides. It also provides a mechanism for members to register and manage their own membership accounts. The committee is grateful for the support of the Board and over 25 members and non-members who reviewed and tested the website.

Volunteers

We continue to be blessed with a core group of active members who are willing to volunteer to bring all members the many benefits we have enjoyed over the years. That said, there is no shortage of activities that require volunteers, for a wide range of time commitments. If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity, please consider BIFHSGO and contact the president at president@bifhsgo.ca if you are interested in volunteering in any capacity..

Strategic Planning

There is nothing to report on the Strategic Plan. No work has been done specifically on the plan. However, some of the items in it have been addressed, in particular the website. The lack of directors has made any progress on other items in the plan difficult, if not impossible.

Partnerships

We have continued our partnerships with the Ottawa Public Library and City of Ottawa Archives. However, due to Covid restrictions, no events have been scheduled by the Library and the rooms at the Archives have not been available to, or needed by, the Society as all meetings have continued to be held virtually via Zoom.

Communications (Duncan Monkhouse)

The how, when and what continue to be a big part of communications for BIFHSGO. This has been even more important during these Covid years. Due to COVID, no in-person meetings have been held at which information could be exchanged with the membership. Instead, we have had to place more emphasis on the BIFHSGO online presence. Coupled with that, our move from in-person meetings to virtual meetings has gained the society a wider geographical audience.

The BIFHSGO communications tasks have been handled by a few volunteers; Sheila Dohoo Faure, web manager, Sue Dawes, newsletter, Gwen Gibson, social media and Barbara Tose, *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR) editor. While these volunteers have done an exceptional job in maintaining communications with our membership, there still needs to be a maestro to direct the choir. If you are interested in working with these talented individuals, please contact the president at president@bifhsgo.ca.

Outreach (Duncan Monkhouse)

Few opportunities for outreach events arose during the year due to Covid restrictions, and volunteers were limited. A few intrepid BIFHSGO volunteers participated in a number of online events, such as booths at a couple of Really Useful Family History Shows held by the U.K.'s Family History Federation. We continued to participate, online, in the Irish Communities of Ottawa group to help get our information out to the Irish community in the Greater Ottawa area.

Barbara Tose continued to run online Socials Wednesday evenings and Friday afternoons bi-weekly throughout the summer and fall of 2021, with a few breaks for conference business. The purpose of these events was to promote member interaction and to provide some social activity for the membership during lock downs. On the whole the Socials were a success. However, as some restrictions started to lift and members began to return to other activities, Barbara decided it was time for her to take a break from the steady schedule. The last Social took place at the end of November 2021. The Board recently organized a couple of similar events, particularly for new members, which were well attended. We hope to continue to hold these from time to time as time and volunteers permit

Education (Duncan Monkhouse)

After a hiatus due to the lack of an education director, the "Before BIFHSGO" education sessions started up again under the guidance of Lynne Baxter. Lynne had nicely settled into her role, with seven talks scheduled for 2021-2022. Details of the talks are included in Marianne Rasmus's program director's report. All the talks were well received and hopes we high for more in the fall. Unfortunately, Lynne became ill and so the talks have once again been put on the back burner.

Membership (Ann Burns)

Number of Memberships by Type				Number of Members			
Category	2019	2020	2021	Category	2019	2020	2021
Individual	421	369	349	Individual	421	369	349
Family	67	61	54	Family	134	122	108
Institutions	23	15	23	Institutions	23	15	23
Total	511	445	426	Total	578	506	480

Membership numbers for 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Please note: Institutions in the above chart include both paid memberships by institutions (8) and those organizations that, for legal or other reasons (eg. exchange), receive printed copies of the ACR quarterly journal.

The pandemic that was declared in March 2020 continued to have both positive and negative impacts on BIFHSGO membership numbers. Holding virtual meetings via Zoom throughout 2021, we attracted international participants and Canadian participants from outside of the Ottawa area. However, membership varies somewhat from year to year and some past members do not re-join for a variety of reasons.

The Board reviewed the membership fees and types of membership for the 2022 membership year. Family memberships were grandfathered, meaning only those who held family memberships in 2021 would be able to renew a family membership for 2022. Individual member rates (new or renewed) remained at \$50 if the member receives the electronic version of ACR. It was decided to raise the rate to \$60 for those who wish to receive a printed version of the ACR to cover some of the extra costs of printing and mailing the journal. Family memberships were increased to \$75 with the e-journal option and \$85 with the printed copy. The effects of these changes will be reflected in next year's report.

With the advent of the new website in September 2021, the use of membership numbers was discontinued.

Monthly meetings continued to be held on Zoom, while special virtual workshops, which were open to anyone at no cost, attracted a large attendance. Perhaps being able to participate from home without having to join the society explains, in part, the decrease in paying members and the increase in participation in our activities.

Program (Marianne Rasmus)

Once again, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our programming remained on-line only and included: monthly feature presentations and education session as well as a special mid-week event. The on-line format meant that this year's program was able to feature excellent presentations on a wide variety of topics from both members, as well as guest speakers from Canada, Ireland, Scotland, England, and Australia.

Meeting virtually has continued to attract people from outside the Ottawa area to our monthly meetings. Attendees have included participants from across North America, the British Isles, Australia, and New Zealand. The average attendance at this year's virtual meetings, at the time of this report, is 140 and has consisted of both members and non-members. Given the increase in BIFHSGO membership of people from outside of the Ottawa area, as well as people's increased comfort level with the Zoom platform, the Board is committed to continuing an on-line presence for our monthly meetings once we begin to meet again in person.

This year, honoraria were offered to speakers as follows: hour-long feature presentations: \$100; 30-minute education sessions: \$50; and Great Moments: \$25 each.

Date	Presentation	Speaker(s)	Title of Webinar(s)	Attendance
SEPT 11 9:30 am 10 am	EDUCATION	Sheila Faure	Website Launch	Total: 121 113 members 8 non-members
	FEATURE	Gillian Leitch	The Paulin(e) Family Reunion: Taking family research to the family	
OCT 9 9:30 am	FEATURE	Steve Gill	Family Photography: Past Present and Future	Total: 107 102 members 5 non-members
NOV13 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION	Ken McKinlay & Glenn Wright	Finding UK Military records: what, where and how	Total: 119 102 members 17 non-members
	FEATURE	Gil Croome, Bill Rasmus, John Reid, Sandra Adams, Nigel Lloyd, Gillian Leitch	Military Memories: family stories about war service	
DEC 11 9 am 10 am	CHRISTMAS SOCIAL			Total: 122 107 members 15 non-members
	GREAT MOMENTS	Mary-Lou Simac	Finding a Great-Grandfather – A Story of Mistakes and Omissions	
		Dianne Brydon	Mine! Mine! Mine!	
JAN 8 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION	Kate Keter	Scottish Kirk Session Records for Family Historians	Total 184 143 members 41 non-members
	FEATURE	Kate Keter	Branching Out	
FEB 12 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION	David Jeanes	Introduction to Welsh Resources	Total 127 105 members 22 non-members
	FEATURE	Kirsten Mercier	600 years of stories from St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle	
MAR 12 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION	Shirley Monkhouse	Tips For Genetic Genealogy DNA Research and Irish Case Studies POSTPONED	Total: 158 100 members 58 non-members
	FEATURE	Carolyn Heald	The Irish Palatines in Ireland and Canada	
APR 9 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION	FindMyPast's Mary McKee	1921 Census Roadshow	Total: 158 130 members 28 non-members
	FEATURE TALK	Mags Gaulden	"Betty Jean's Story" Adoption, Forensic and Genetic DNA	
Apr 20 7 pm	Special DNA Event	Dr. Joe Flood	DNA and Genealogy – The DNA of Cornwall	Total:157
MAY 14 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION	Bob Butler	Selection of Genealogy Programs and Services	TBD
	FEATURE	Anne Coulter	The Diary Project	
JUN 11 9 am 10 am	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING			TBD
	GREAT MOMENTS	Sue Lambeth	Lost Connections Found	
		Christine Jackson	Voices From a Silent Past	
		Jennifer Hill	Solving a 100-year-old Mystery Using DNA	

This year, BIFHSGO introduced a mentorship program. The objective is to connect novice presenters who have a story to tell, but who need or want assistance in the preparation process, with experienced speakers who are able to share some of their skills and tips. To date, three BIFHSGO members are being mentored and preparing for upcoming presentations.

Tasks performed by the program director included organizing the monthly program, finding speakers, and attending monthly board meetings. The program director also collected presentation abstracts and speakers'

biographies and ensured they were posted on the website and forwarded to the ACR Editor; forwarded communications for inclusion in the monthly newsletter; coordinated with the treasurer for payment of speakers; liaised with speakers in preparation for their presentations; scheduled and facilitated practice run-throughs; introduced and thanked the speakers at the meetings; prepared thank you letters for the speakers; and created follow-up emails to participants, with handouts when available. Until the position of education director was filled, the program director also scheduled and delivered the education sessions.

Special thanks are due to Dianne Brydon who, after three years as program director, stepped down from the position due to other commitments. Her skill at adapting to the on-line format, and her professional on-line presence, were vital in laying the groundwork for our successes on-line. Thanks also go to those volunteers who have helped with the technical requirements of our virtual meetings, and have kept them running smoothly: John McConkey, David Jeanes, and Sheila Faure.

And finally, a sincere thank you goes out to all those members who have been willing to share their stories, and to those who have forwarded their comments and suggestions. These contributions are very much appreciated and are vital to keeping the BIFHSO program fresh and relevant.

Director at Large (Sue Dawes)

Sue Dawes took on the communications task of generating the BIFHSGO Newsletter. The newsletter has been sent to the membership the week of each monthly meeting since September 2021 and is one of the main ways that the membership is informed on the activities at BIFHSGO.

Research and Projects (Ken MacKinlay)

This year was a relatively quiet year for me as the director of research and projects. Much of the research project work has been behind the scenes undertaken by those working on the migration of the BIFHSGO website to the new platform. This work has resulted in an integrated database and search system where a person only has to go to one place to search by name. My thanks go out to all those involved in this website migration project. In addition, Patricia Roberts-Pichette continues to work on updating the Children's Emigration Homes (Middlemore) database, including a new research guide.