



British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa

2024–2025 Annual Reports
TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
14 JUNE 2025

Annual Report – President, Dianne Brydon

Overview

With this AGM, we mark the end of our 30th anniversary year. We commemorated by:

- ❖ highlighting milestones from our history;
- ❖ reprising some of the excellent and frequently recalled talks from the past which were not recorded at the time – presenting them a second time, and recording them, allows members to access them in our video archive;
- ❖ acknowledging our volunteers, many of whom have served for over two decades, and recognizing the many dedicated souls who have been inducted into the BIFHSGO Hall of Fame since the beginning;
- ❖ highlighting the remarkable research projects that the Society has completed over the last 30 years, through a talk by Research Director Sue Lambeth at our April monthly meeting, with a particular focus on the work of its many volunteers; and
- ❖ culminating with an Award of Merit from the National Genealogical Society in recognition of all the activities over the past 30 years on which those volunteers worked so hard.

I am honoured to serve with BIFHSGO's thoughtful and insightful directors. As a group, and as individuals, we worked on setting the Society's direction and delivering the goals established last year to guide us until 2026. You will find the status on work to date elsewhere in this annual report, and details in various directors' reports.

The following are some of the key achievements of the board:

- ❖ The Program Director (Nancy Higgins) stepped into a vacant position, delivered the spring activities, and built next year's program in record time.
- ❖ The Research Director (Sue Lambeth) oversaw work toward completion of long-term transcription projects and the initiation of several new ones; and worked with the web manager to create a new Research and Projects web page.
- ❖ The Outreach Director (Patricia Grainger) developed the parameters for a student award at the Ottawa Heritage Fair, and created criteria for helping the board decide in which groups to become an organizational member for maximum benefit to BIFHSGO members.

- ❖ The Secretary (Laurie Dougherty) refined the nomination and selection process for the Hall of Fame.
- ❖ The Treasurer (Caroline Smallman) worked with the bank to implement auto-deposit of e-transfers; found ways to reduce costs, including preparing and filing the BIFHSGO Charity Tax Return; and implemented the re-investment of surplus cash in GICs over a 3-year time cycle.
- ❖ The Membership Director (Anne Coulter) conducted a survey of departing members in an effort to discover why they left our fold and produced valuable analysis.
- ❖ The Past President (Duncan Monkhouse) sent a record number of member communications and stepped forward to serve as a co-chair (Program) of the 2025 committee.
- ❖ The web manager (Sheila Dohoo Faure), who is an ex officio member, created a website advisory committee and began a process to make some structural changes to the website.

Several other volunteer leaders contributed to our successful year.

- ❖ Co-chairs Mary-Lou Simac and Marianne Rasmus and their team delivered the 2024 annual conference, attended by 220 people, 145 of whom were BIFHSGO members. BIFHSGO realized a profit of \$5,694.
- ❖ Planning has begun on the 2025 conference, thanks to Brian LeConte and Duncan Monkhouse stepping in as co-chairs.
- ❖ BIFHSGO's Special Interest Groups continued to gather interested participants on a regular basis, including the British North America SIG (Marianne Rasmus, coordinator), the DNA SIG (Susan Courage), the London SIG (Maureen Amey), and the Writing Group (Carol Annett).
- ❖ Barbara Tose retired in December as managing editor of the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR) quarterly journal, after an exemplary term leading the team; and we welcomed Paul Cripwell into the role.

I invite members to read the reports of directors and volunteer leaders in order to get an idea of the range and extent of BIFHSGO's activities and the number of people who offer their time to deliver them. You will sometimes see the same names mentioned in several different categories, as many of our volunteers serve in double, triple and sometimes quadruple capacities.

Board

Our bylaws state that the Society's Board should comprise "between nine (9) and eleven (11) directors," including the 10 named directorships—president, past-president, secretary, treasurer, membership, communications, program, education, outreach, and research and projects.

We started the year with 10 directors. Susan Smart and Beth Adams resigned for personal reasons during the year, and we thank them for their contributions at the board table. Nancy Higgins stepped in to serve out Beth's term as Program Director, and Marnie McCall

offered to serve in place of Susan. Membership Director Anne Coulter picked up the reins as newsletter editor. Through all of this turnover, the high standard of program delivery to our members has been maintained.

This year the Board says goodbye to Patricia Grainger who has served on the board for two terms, the last year as Outreach Director. We thank Laurie Dougherty for her dedicated service as Secretary, overseeing the society's corporate records, and we are grateful she has agreed to continue on the Board as a Director-at-large. We also thank Nancy Higgins and Marnie McCall for stepping in to complete unexpected vacancies.

In 2025-2026, the Board will have nine directors, with three vacancies.

Name	Position	First Year on the Board	Term Ends
Dianne Brydon	President	2019	2026
Duncan Monkhouse	Past President (appointed)	2018	2026
Margie Kolesar	Secretary	2025	2027
Vacant	Program		
Caroline Smallman	Treasurer	2024	2026
Vacant	Communications		
Anne Coulter	Membership	2022	2026
Vacant	Outreach		
Susan Lambeth	Research and Projects	2023	2027
Paul Cripwell	Director at Large	2025	2027
Laurie Dougherty	Director at Large	2023	2027
Kathryn Potter	Director at Large	2025	2027

We are grateful that members have come forward to fill some positions: Margie Kolesak as Secretary, and Paul Cripwell and Kathryn Potter as Directors-at large. Paul will continue as Managing Editor of the ACR.

We are still seeking someone to take on the Program Director role – we have people to assist, but no one to coordinate. We will be able to offer presentations that have already been booked, but without a director to liaise with speakers, we will not be able to continue beyond that.

The President is currently assuming the duties of the vacant Communications Director's position, as well as the social media publisher. If we cannot fill the vacant roles, we would like to have additional Directors-at-large to share some of the tasks. If you can help out, please contact Duncan Monkhouse at pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca.

Partnerships

BIFHSGO engages with several organizations.

Perhaps the most important is BIFHSGO's long-standing memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Library and Archives Canada, under which we have agreed to index various record sets dealing with British Home Children. The results of our volunteers' hard work have been used on their website and in our Name Index. We are beginning negotiations for a renewed MOU.

We have a working relationship with the City of Ottawa Archives as a result of an agreement with the Ontario Genealogical Society (Ontario Ancestors), Ottawa Branch, established when we transferred our library. They, in turn, have a formal agreement with the Archives. This agreement allows BIFHSGO to use the Archives meeting rooms.

As BIFHSGO is an organizational member of Ontario Ancestors, our members can join for a slightly discounted fee, and we are grateful to the OGS for promoting our monthly meetings and annual conference through their weekly newsletter.

BIFHSGO is a member of the informal network of Irish groups and societies in Ottawa. We, along with others, supported the initiative to install a memorial to commemorate the 360 Irish immigrants who arrived in Ottawa during the Irish Famine, and subsequently died. That memorial will be unveiled at McDonald Park in Ottawa on 14 June.

We took part in the Ottawa Scottish Society's annual Hogman-eh, and we regularly share information about their activities on our social media accounts.

We are a voting member of Volunteer Ottawa, and benefit from their network and educational talks.

Volunteers

We continue to be blessed with a core group who volunteer to bring to all members the many benefits we have enjoyed over the years. Sometimes that is as simple as helping with logistics at in-person events, or helping to index archival documents for our databases. Many of them are named in the individual director's reports.

Many Society activities require volunteers, with varying time commitments. Please consider joining our team where you will meet friendly people, learn new things, and help your Society continue to thrive. Watch for calls for interest in helping with specific projects or activities. Your contributions can be large or small, every bit helps. Will we find your name included in next year's report?

To those of you who already voluntarily serve our Society, we are immensely grateful for all the time and effort that you contribute. Perhaps you will inspire others to step up in some capacity.

In Memoriam

This past program year we lost John Fyler Townesend, a member of the BIFHSGO Hall of Fame. who served on the board from 1996-2002. We send condolences to his family, and

acknowledge his dedication and contribution to BIFHSGO, as we do to all loyal members who gave time and support to BIFHSGO and of whose passing we are not aware.

In closing, it is a pleasure to serve as your President. I value the friendships I have made and the advice I have received on family history tips and techniques for my personal research. I have been inspired by our members' stories and the research behind them. And I am grateful for the time members are willing to devote to various BIFHSGO activities.

Attached:

Status Report on BIFHSGO's Goals 2024-2026

Directors Reports for 2024

Status Report on BIFHSGO's Goals 2024–2026

In April 2024 we shared with members our goals for 2024 to 2026. A status report on those that are already underway or completed follows here:

Education:

- ❖ Assist members with their research skills: Education Talks on a variety of topics focussed on tips and techniques.
- ❖ Offer new member orientation: to be addressed in 2026.
- ❖ Take advantage of technology: information session on AI : to be addressed in 2026.

Partnerships and Outreach:

- ❖ Increase partnerships with other genealogy organizations to share information: created a comprehensive list of Irish groups in preparation for the 2024 conference, to add to the Scottish list from 2023; joined OGS and secured a discounted membership fee for BIFHSGO members joining; created criteria to help determine which groups to join for maximum benefit to BIFHSGO members.
- ❖ Increase BIFHSGO's profile the community: table at the OGS annual conference in Toronto; participated in Hogman-eh; participated in City of Ottawa's Heritage Day; hosted a table at the Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair for middle and high school students; participated in the Volunteer Ottawa Open House in May.

Research and Projects:

- ❖ Improve the accuracy and completeness of the British Home Children (BHC) databases in BIFHSGO's Name Index: Middlemore research guide published. Death Index was removed. Work will continue in 2026 to address Search issues.
- ❖ Continue research and projects in support of the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) 2006 MOU by publishing new data through LAC and the Name Index, and by fostering the relationship with LAC and other cultural organizations: collaboration has been strengthened; databases have been transferred; work has begun to update the MOU in 2025-2026. Transcriptions and verification work will continue.
- ❖ Complete the descriptive inventory listing of the John Sayers' files and records and develop a plan for its management: inventory completed collection management plan developed to better respond to queries.
- ❖ Encourage the development of new projects, and support project leads and their volunteers: several new projects are underway and will continue in 2025-2026.
- ❖ Highlight BIFHSGO's volunteers: Spotlight on BIFHSGO talk in April; Volunteer Appreciation Tea in April.

Connecting Members:

- ❖ Increase opportunities for members to connect in person: in-person pub night at the conference; initiated monthly social drop-ins; encouraged attendance at monthly meetings with refreshments and book grab.
- ❖ Consult members to assess demographic changes, preferences for programming, awards, etc.: various surveys completed throughout 2024-2025 – demographics from the 2024 general survey and new member survey informed planning; awards

approach revised as a result of feedback; members preferences for programming will be implemented in 2026.

- ❖ Celebrate our 30th anniversary, June 2024 to June 2025: highlighted milestones from our history; reprised talks presented before we recorded them and added them to our video archive; acknowledged our volunteers; highlighting the research projects that the Society has completed over the last 30 years; received an Award of Merit from the National Genealogical Society.

Website:

- ❖ Ascertain if, and how, members use the website and solicit ideas for improvement: advisory committee established to advise on the structure and management of the website.
- ❖ Develop website design and implementation guidelines: completed in 2024

Capacity to deliver goals:

- ❖ Increase Board training and orientation: materials created for orienting new members; Program Director orientation.
- ❖ Develop a succession plan: to be addressed in 2026.
- ❖ Entice more members, particularly non-members who regularly attend monthly meetings: departing member survey completed in May; this will be a focus for 2026.
- ❖ Reorganize how the Program is determined and delivered: task allocation model worked well, needs tweaking; a Program Director is required.
- ❖ Ensure continuation of the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR) quarterly journal and its profile: new managing editor secured in December; each newly published ACR issue is highlighted in the newsletter. More profile in 2026.
- ❖ Recognize volunteer contributions: Volunteer appreciation tea held in April, annual report acknowledged contributions.

Board Focus in 2026:

Membership: Our membership numbers dropped for 2025. Those who responded to the departing members survey said that they were quite satisfied with what BIFHSGO had to offer, but they did not renew because they had changed their interests, preferred an in-person conference or were no longer able to participate for financial reasons. The board will continue to evaluate this trend and focus on ways we might increase our numbers for 2026. Part of this will be a focus on new member orientation.

Program: We are without a Program Director for 2025-2026, and hosts for our meetings. The board will focus on if and how tasks can be distributed to ensure the program is delivered.

Website: Our website is the primary repository of BIFHSGO information for members and those seeking information about British ancestry. In 2025-2026, we will focus on improving searchability and organization of the material.

Directors' Reports

Program (Nancy Higgins)

During the 2024-2025 Program Year, BIFHGO continued to offer hybrid monthly meetings. For eight of the ten meetings, attendees had the option of attending either in-person or online. During January and February, once again, meetings were online only so as to avoid possible winter weather disruptions.

The hybrid format allows those who prefer the online format, and those living outside the Ottawa area, to remain engaged with BIFHSGO's program. While most attendees join the meetings online, a solid group of members have gathered each month at Knox Presbyterian Church, in Ottawa's Centretown, to chat over refreshments, share their genealogy stories and get to know one another.

The hybrid format also allows for the recruitment of speakers for monthly meetings to present either in-person or remotely which has expanded the pool from which speakers can be drawn. This year we have had excellent presentations from as far away as Scotland to enrich our program.

BIFHSGO Program 2024-2025

	Presentation	Speaker(s)	Title	Attendance
SEPTEMBER 14 9:00 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Patricia Roberts-Pichette & Glenn Wright	30th Anniversary Spotlight: Middlemore Children: In Their Own Words	Total: 132 Members: 90 (68%) Non-members: 42 (32%) Online: 98 (74%) In-person: 34 (26%)
	FEATURE TALK	Laurie Fyffe	Exciting Cause: an instigation into women confined to the Kingston Asylum for the Insane (Rockwood) Kingston, Ontario, 1890s.	
OCTOBER 12 9:00 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Grace Lewis	OGS Ottawa Branch Library	Total: 96 Members: 81 (84%) Non-members: 15 (16%) Online: 74 (77%) In-person: 22 (23%)
	FEATURE TALK	Barbara Tose	From the BIFHSGO Vault: Travels with My Aunt	
NOVEMBER 9 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Seana Jones	Petawawa Military Museum	Total: 106 Members: 82 (77%) Non-Members: 24 (23%) Online: 80 (75%) In-person: 26 (25%)
	FEATURE TALK	Dianne Brydon	Re-Building A Life After Service in the Canadian Forestry Corps, With Help From the Soldier's Settlement Board	
	Holiday Social			Total: 136

	Presentation	Speaker(s)	Title	Attendance
DECEMBER 14 9 am 10 am	GREAT MOMENTS	Nancy Higgins	Over the Golden Bridge	Members: 96 (71%) Non-Members: 40 (29%) Online: 98 (72%) In-person: 38 (28%)
		Ann Burns	From the Vault: It happened in Coolross	
		Carol Annett	An Unexpected Gift	
		Veronica Scrimger	Blown Away	
JAN 11, 2025 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Robert Urquhart	How Valuable are Valuation Rolls?	Online only Total: 177 Members: 123 (69%) Non-members 54 (31%)
	FEATURE TALK	Alison Hare	From the BIFHSGO Vault: The Time of Cholera	
FEBRUARY 8 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Paul Cripwell	Excel and Family History: How they can work together	Online Only Total: 192 Members: 125 (65%) Non-Members: 67 (35%) —
	FEATURE TALK	Dawn Kelly	E.F. Kelly and the Champagne of Ginger Ales	
MARCH 8 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Ken McKinlay	Exploring the Official Government Newspapers: The Gazettes of the UK	Total 157 Members: 107 (68%) Non-members: 50 (32%) In-person: 29 (18%) Online: 128 (82%)
	FEATURE TALK	Marianne Rasmus	Ripped from the Headlines: <i>Death on the Forest</i>	
APRIL 12 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Sheila Faure & Nigel Lloyd	30 th Anniversary Spotlight Introduction to No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station	Total: 112 Members: 86 (77%) Non-members: 26 (23%) In-person: 32 (28%) Online: 81 (72%)
	FEATURE TALK	Sue Lambeth	30 th Anniversary Spotlight: On Research and Projects	
MAY 10 9 am 10 am	EDUCATION TALK	Marnie McCall	From the BIFHSGO Vault: Copyright for the Family Historian	Total: 101 Members: 64 (63%) Non-Members: 37 (37%) In-person: 22 (22%) Online: 79 (78%)
	FEATURE TALK	Kristen den Hartog	The Roosting Box: Rebuilding the Body After the First World War	
JUNE 14 9 am 10 am	AGM			
	GREAT MOMENTS	Laurie Dougherty	From Penrhyndedraeth to Peterborough: Digging Deeper into My Welsh Ancestry	

	Presentation	Speaker(s)	Title	Attendance
		Andy Desjardins	A Genealogical Revelation: From an Only Child to a Family of Nine	
		Barbara Tose	A Cautionary Tale: How I Built a Brick Wall with DNA	

We are grateful for our dedicated team of production volunteers who seamlessly make our hybrid model work. These included David Jeanes at the helm; Marianne Rasmus and Ken McKinlay, who together ensured that each meeting ran smoothly; and Barbara Tose and Duncan Monkhouse who stepped in when required.

In addition to hosting the meetings Andy Desjardins provided assistance with the pre-meeting set-up and arranged refreshments together with Veronica Scrimger and Sue Kilbank. In-person attendees were greeted by Anne Coulter, our Membership Director . My apologies to anyone I have missed and my thanks to you.

The honoraria offered to speakers are as follows: hour-long Feature Presentations: \$125; 30-minute Education sessions: \$75; and Great Moments: \$25 each.

This past year has been a time of some upheaval in the execution of the Program Director tasks. The previous incumbent left the position for personal reasons and in the interim critical tasks were assumed by the President. In February, the position was taken on an interim basis to focus once again on the key tasks of the Program Director, and build the program for 2025-2026.

Tasks performed by the Program Director include organizing the monthly program - both Education Sessions and Feature Presentations, finding speakers, and attending monthly board meetings. The Program Director collects presentation abstracts and speakers' biographies and ensures they are posted on the website, and forwards meeting information to the ACR Editor. In addition, the Program Director communicates with the newsletter editor; coordinates with the treasurer for payment; liaises with speakers in preparation for their presentations; schedules and facilitates practice run-throughs, as needed; introduces and thanks the speakers at the monthly meeting as required; prepares thank you letters for the speakers; and has purchased refreshments for the monthly meetings supported by a stalwart group of volunteers.

To all those members who have been willing to share their inspirational stories over this past year, thank you! Thanks also to for comments and suggestions. This feedback is vital; the BIFHSGO Program is richest when it is relevant and responsive.

To all the experts who provided their knowledge and expertise to enrich our BIFHSGO members, thank you.

If you have a story to tell, but need assistance in the preparation process, there are experienced speakers who are willing to share their skills and expertise with you. If you have speaker or program suggestions, please forward them to programs@bifhsgo.ca.

2024 Conference (Co-chairs: Mary-Lou Simac, Program and Marianne Rasmus, Admin)

“Teaghlach Gaelach: A Celebration of Irish Family History”

Continuing the three-year rotation of BIFHSGO’s primary countries of interest, the 30th anniversary conference focused on Ireland. The conference was attended by 220 people, 145 of whom were BIFHSGO members. There were participants from five of Canada’s 13 provinces and territories, as well as from five other countries (USA, UK, IRL, AUS, NZ). BIFHSGO realized a profit of \$5,694.

The conference took place on Saturday, 26 October and Sunday, 27 October over Zoom. It consisted of presentations by six featured speakers (all of whom were based in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland), the interactive Conference Connect & Expert Connect sessions, an Expo Hall, and an Irish pub night. The conference was completely virtual, other than the Irish pub night, which was in-person only.

The BIFHSGO website was the initial point of contact for conference information and online registration (member price: \$C35, non-member: \$C50). The Registrants’ Portal provided welcome messages, conference information, Irish research resources, and access to the Expo Hall with various discounts and offers. Door prizes were awarded at the end of each day.

The conference was promoted through communications to members, monthly meetings, *Anglo-Celtic Roots*, outreach email campaigns to like-minded organizations, press releases, our social media (FB; Bluesky), irishradio.ca and at various events, including the OGS conference in June 2024. Several speakers promoted the conference through their own social media, and bloggers also mentioned it.

A survey conducted following the conference received a 25 per cent response rate, and many respondents offered detailed comments which will help plan the 2025 Conference. Of note, 89 per cent indicated a preference for a virtual format. There were many kudos about the high quality of the conference. If the survey respondents can be considered to have been spokespeople for all attendees, then the conference can be deemed highly successful.

A total of 23 volunteers worked to deliver the conference, from initial planning until the survey was complete and the final report submitted. Thank you to all those who contributed to making the conference a success. In addition to the two co-chairs, the 2024 conference planning committee members were: Dianne Brydon, Kim Carson, Paul Cripwell, Sheila Dohoo Faure, Trish Grainger, David Jeanes, Jean Kitchen, Georgia Roberts, Caroline Smallman, Susan Smart and Russell Wilkins. Other volunteers included: Beth Adams, Anne Coulter, Andy Desjardins, Laurie Dougherty, Thierry Faure, Duncan Monkhouse, John Murray, Kathy Wallace, and Lynne Willoughby.

Membership (Anne Coulter)

	2022	2023	2024	2025	Difference from 2024
Memberships by type					
Individual	337	309	325	291	-34
Family	47	25	20	18	-2
Organization	7	5	3	3	0
Lifetime	6	7	8	8	0
Total Members	397	346	356	320	-36
Individual Memberships					
#members Ottawa	230	198	201	183	-18
# members outside Ottawa	90	78	91	95	4
# members outside Canada	17	17	15	13	-2
% members Ottawa	68%	64%	62%	63%	
% members outside Ottawa	27%	25%	28%	33%	
% members outside Canada	5%	6%	5%	4%	

Membership numbers for 2025 up to April 27, 2025

The number of Individual Memberships in 2025 is 34 less than in 2024. The proportion of members located in the Ottawa area (63%), outside the Ottawa area (33%), and outside of Canada (4%) hasn't changed much from 2024.

The membership fees did not change for 2025. The discount period for buying the 2025 memberships was extended this year in order to reduce the workload around the time of the conference. This policy resulted in 57% of the membership using the discount for 2025 compared to 33% for 2024. The majority of people made their payment using VISA/PayPal (77%), followed by eTransfer (21%) and cheque 2%.

Last year the Board decided to send a brief survey to people who did not renew to help us understand people's reasons for not renewing. Last year the survey was sent out to 56 people and this year it was sent to 76. The response rate for the surveys was low but those who did respond said that they did not renew because they had changed their interests, preferred an in-person conference or were no longer able to participate for financial reasons. The people who responded said that they were quite satisfied with what BIFHSGO had to offer. Looking at membership attrition by the date the more recent members account for 37% of the total.

Members who did not renew for 2025 by the date they joined BIFHSGO

Join Dates	# members not renewed
1995 - 2000	6
2000 - 2010	5
2011 - 2020	22
2022	8
2023	7
2024	28
Total	76

The number of members opting for the membership with a paper copy of the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* journal is about the same as in 2024 (27%) compared to 2025 (29%).

Communications

A communications committee consisting of the Social Media Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, Web Manager, Outreach Director and in the past few months the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* Editor met monthly to plan the communications calendar. This has ensured timely, cohesive and coordinated messaging about BIFHSGO's many activities.

The 2024 conference survey continued to indicate that our regular newsletters are the most effective means of communicating with our members.

Website (Sheila Dohoo Faure)

The web site is our central communications hub. All BIFHSGO products and activities are hosted there and messages to members link back to the website content. Information about events, events, monthly meeting announcements, notable news, videos, newsletters and the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR) quarterly journal was updated and posted regularly.

Highlights of this year's website:

- ❖ Preparation for, and publication of, the 30th anniversary year activities
- ❖ Preparation and management of 2024 conference pages and registration system
- ❖ Setting up and managing the 2024 membership accounts
- ❖ Creation of a website advisory committee to advise the webmanager
- ❖ Deletion of the home child death index
- ❖ Ongoing work with our web hosts to improve searchability on our website
- ❖ Preparation of a searchable list of names to facilitate searches of our indexes

Newsletter (Susan Smart until November; Anne Coulter December to June)

The newsletter is e-mailed to the membership and to non-members who have asked to be on the distribution list. It is sent two days before each monthly meeting, and in mid-summer; a shorter version sent midway between meetings invites members to upcoming events.

Regular Communications with Members (Duncan Monkhouse)

Several messages are sent through our mailing list before the conference, and in the period preceding membership renewal time. These mass mailings are sent through our Mailchimp account to members and to non-members who have asked to be on our mailing list. In some months, additional messages are sent to our members, such as the annual call for nominations to the Hall of Fame and official notice of the AGM. The members' survey tells us the monthly newsletter and email notices are very useful.

Social Media (Dianne Brydon)

The Society's president currently looks after the social media accounts. Information about BIFHSGO monthly and SIG meetings is posted each month, and posts from other family history/genealogy/local history societies that are deemed of interest to our members are shared. There was significant activity leading up to the 2024 Conference and afterward to promote the opportunity to watch videos of conference presentations. We were fortunate that many groups and bloggers re-shared the conference posts and continue to "like" and "share" our content.

Anglo-Celtic Roots 2024 (Barbara Tose, Managing Editor)

BIFHSGO's quarterly journal (ACR) publishes articles written by our members about many aspects of their family histories and their research. In the 2024 year (ACR operates on the calendar year), nine articles from seven authors were published, mostly written by seasoned BIFHSGO authors but at least one by a new author to BIFHSGO. This year *Anglo-Celtic Roots* had something for everyone—from the 250th celebrations of the Scottish immigrants who arrived aboard the *Hector* in 1773, to aviators surviving behind enemy lines in WW II; from a Scottish war bride, to emigration from Ukraine; and from the discovery of a family letter sent in 1823 to Canada from Scotland, to the power of DNA in confirming family connections.

A writing competition, BIFHSGO's third, was held this year to mark our 30th anniversary. Members were given a year to prepare their entries. Six judges evaluated the 12 entries against pre-established criteria and assigned rankings. Points were attributed to each ranking and the winners determined by the total number of points accumulated. We announced first, second and third-place winners and three honourable mentions at our September meeting. Certificates were presented to all. The winners received prizes of \$300, \$200 and \$100 respectively.

Winners:

1. Claire Callender: *The Misses Strachan from Fyvie*
2. Carol Annett: *Who Was Annabella Chatterton?*

3. Veronica Scrimger: *Hannah Scrimger, 1840–1876: The Untold Story of a Mariner’s Hardworking Wife*

Honourable Mentions:

Ann Burns: *The Indomitable Frances Core*

Adrienne Stevenson: *Robert Malcolm: Saddler, Soldier, Sportsman*

Linda Reid: *DNA Confirms a Lloyd family in Ireland for Two and a Half Centuries*

The first and second place articles were published in the fall and winter editions respectively and one of the honourable mentions also appeared in the winter edition. The third-place winner and remaining honourable mentions were scheduled for publication in 2025. Christine Jackson and I coordinated the writing competition. We would like to thank the people who agreed to be judges for the competition; they gave a significant amount of time and effort to the process and we couldn’t have done it without them. We were delighted to receive from one of the judges (a professional editor) detailed and unsolicited feedback on each article and this was shared with those entrants who wished to receive it.

For several years now we have also been publishing biographies (one per quarter) of men who died at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station during World War I. These articles, which have been initially posted on the BIFHSGO website, are written by a small group of volunteers who research and compile the biographies so that the sacrifice of these people will not be forgotten. In 2024 the soldiers’ biographies appearing in ACR were written by Heather Carmody, Marcia Clements and Sheila Dohoo Faure. Along with her many other duties for BIFHSGO, Sheila also leads this tiny band of writers and selects which biographies will appear in ACR.

I encourage you to read all our ACR stories—if you haven’t already. We boast excellent writers who all have fascinating, well-researched stories to tell! My thanks go out to all the authors who submitted their items for publication and to our competition last year. We would be hard-pressed to produce a quality journal without you. Remember that we always welcome articles from any of our members.

Members have the choice to receive a printed version of ACR or to read it online. Issues from 1995 to the present are available in full to members on our website. Non-members have access on the site to complete issues up to 2019 and the list of contents for 2020 to the present. The 2020 issues will be made accessible to the public throughout this year, as the 2025 quarterly editions are published. According to the membership lists, 70 percent of members now receive the journal electronically.

Each year a panel of judges reviews the articles published during the calendar year and determines which author will be awarded “Best ACR Article by a Member.” The winner for 2024 will be announced at the June AGM. This process was carried out by the new managing editor, Paul Cripwell, who I know would like to thank those members who have agreed to act as judges this year.

This has been my last year as managing editor and I want to thank all the people I relied on for the production of the journal. In particular, I wish to thank Christine Jackson, who has taken care of most of the editing and assisted with other production tasks. Jean Kitchen also assisted with editing when extra help was needed; she joined Sheila Dohoo Faure, Marnie McCall and Christine Jackson as my regular proofreaders who caught my mistakes

before going to print. Ann Burns continues to take care of mailing copies to our U.S. and international members. John Reid contributed his last four “Cream of the Crop” columns in 2024 and I would be remiss if I did not note and thank him for his support through the years. If anyone else has helped me in the past five years and I have failed to mention you here, please accept my apologies and many thanks. I hope you will continue to support ACR and the new managing editor, Paul Cripwell.

And, to the members who faithfully read—and, hopefully, enjoy—the journal every quarter, thank you for your continued support.

Outreach (Patricia Grainger)

BIFHSGO Outreach was active on several fronts during 2024 and through the early months of 2025.

In September 2024, with the help of Lynne Willoughby, we began a drop-in chat which takes place on the third Thursday of each month. These get-togethers are held at Arlington Woods church where there is a small café which serves hot and cold drinks and delicious homemade sweet treats. With the exception of December, the drop-in has been held each month. Attendance varies but our most recent gathering in April, 2025 was attended by 16.

BIFHSGO had a table again this year at Heritage Day at City Hall on February 18, 2025 and this year in addition to brochures, information about the Back to Basics series, upcoming events, etc., we also displayed material about Home Children and Patricia Roberts-Pichette was at the table with me. Many people came by and Patricia was kept busy particularly conversing with teachers and people whose ancestors were home children.

Again, this year, the St. Patrick’s Day parade was cancelled. We were equipped with the BIFHSGO banner and other promotional signs but at the last minute, the parade was called off.

On 29 April 2025, BIFHSGO participated again in the Regional Heritage Fair. This year, BIFHSGO offered a prize of \$100 to any student who submitted a research project highlighting the history of a family or family member of British Isles ancestry. We were also offering a one-year membership in BIFHSGO and the chance to present their research at the June monthly meeting. The panel of judges did not find any project that met these criteria and so no winner was chosen.

Outreach was active in the fall 2024 Irish Conference. Contact was made with many Irish genealogy societies and organizations in Canada, the United States, Ireland, New Zealand, and Australia. Two of these societies were especially pleased to be in contact with BIFHSGO, specifically the North of Ireland Family History Society and the Irish Genealogical Society International. Follow-up with the NIFHS led to BIFHSGO promoting their Conference and they promoted ours to their membership. The IGSI held an on-line Irish Heritage Day in March 2025. BIFHSGO was invited to contribute a door prize to this event and two winners each received a one-year membership to BIFHSGO. Both of these organizations are interested in maintaining continuing contact with us.

All of these collaborative activities are beneficial to BIFHSGO and its members. It is hoped that further cooperation of this type can be organized with other groups in the coming

year. Work is on-going on a set of Guidelines to give direction to discussions about collaboration with our other Sister organizations.

Research and Projects (Sue Lambeth)

The recent presentation - "BIFHSGO's Spotlight on Research and Projects" - given at our April monthly meeting, highlighted the remarkable research projects that the Society has completed over the last 30 years with a particular focus on the work of its many volunteers. Because BIFHSGO has contributed so much to so many projects since 1995, it was not possible to describe all of the outstanding initiatives for which BIFHSGO has been recognized over the past three decades. Instead, the presentation focused a spotlight on some of the notable achievements of our volunteers who worked on settlement migration, military, and home children research projects. This snapshot illustrated BIFHSGO's significant and lasting impact on important research that has deepened the story of Canada's past.

In February, a 45-minute presentation was given on "BIFHSGO's Resources for British Home Children Research" to the Ontario Ancestors (OGS) Special Interest Group for British Home Children at their request. It was originally delivered by Zoom to the public and it continues to be available to OGS members. This talk covered database content on our website and other resources that we make available to members such as ACR articles and copies of PowerPoint presentations. It also provided an overview of some of our new research projects and the accomplishments of our volunteers.

In late summer, a new Research and Projects web page was added to our website. It was launched with inaugural articles on "Home Children: BIFHSGO's First Long-Term Research Project" and on the contribution that Patricia Roberts-Pichette has made over the past 23 years. In the coming months, this page will feature a series of new profiles providing project highlights.

Support was provided over the year to Patricia Roberts-Pichette for the publication of her "Research Guide to the Children's (Middlemore) Emigration Homes Index." The pdf version of her Guide was completed and it has been posted on our website. It can be accessed through both the Research and Projects page and the Name Index page.

Patricia Roberts-Pichette also gave a special "Question and Answer" session in November on home children to volunteers who have been working on transcribing Department of Immigration records and on other related initiatives connected to the John Sayers collection. Patricia's session lasted about three hours and a summary was drafted. We hope to make this information more widely available soon.

Our volunteers have continued to prepare transcriptions according to the requirements of our longstanding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Library and Archives Canada (LAC). This work is currently focused on the records related to home children in the RG 76 (Department of Immigration) collection.

In recent months, LAC has initiated a process with BIFHSGO to update this MOU. Meetings have been held to review the progress of our work indexing the RG 76 records, and to also

help us to define some new projects and opportunities that will build on our longstanding relationship and partnership.

BIFHSGO has continued to provide funds to the Ottawa Public Library and to the OGS-Ottawa Branch Library for the acquisition of books and materials. Grace Lewis (Librarian), assisted by BIFHSGO's Pam Cooper, has continued to provide information on these holdings to our members throughout the year. A subscription to the *British Newspaper Archive* (BNA) was provided free of charge to the public in the City of Ottawa Archives, but a decision was made by the Board to cancel this subscription because it had very little usage.

The City of Ottawa Archives has continued support to BIFHSGO by providing a secure archival storage space for the John Sayers collection and by giving us access to a work space in their reference room. This support has substantially benefited BIFHSGO because it has given volunteers the opportunity to complete the inventory of the Sayers' research folders and also to initiate three new projects using the Sayers' material.

The City Archives accepted three items from BIFHSGO into their collection including the printer's proof for the "The Ottawa Sharpshooters," a CD of the Sharpshooter book launch, and a CD with a copy of Captain Todd's original diary.

Work has been ongoing on the BIFHSGO website Name Index page to improve the accuracy of some of our databases, including the removal of the Home Children Death Index. Other changes have been flagged to improve reporting and searching functions, and research continues to add content to several databases including the Children's Emigration Homes-CEH Index and the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station (WW1) Index.

Several of our members who attended the April research and projects presentation have expressed an interest in developing ideas for new projects, with fresh approaches. It is exciting to see these new ideas being proposed.

Secretary (Laurie Dougherty)

Each month, I provide administrative support to the Board by preparing the agenda, and distributing minutes and action items after monthly meetings. In April, I filed our Annual Report to Corporations Canada and provided an updated list of Directors for their records. In preparation for this AGM, I prepared notices and documents for the website to help the membership understand the work of the Board of Directors and other key volunteers. The Hall of Fame nomination is an annual award which I was pleased to oversee again this year. To honour the 30th Anniversary of BIFHSGO, I developed orientation material for new Board members and reorganized our Google workspace to increase organizational capacity.

BIFHSGO Awards for Best Talks by Members (Best Education Session, Best Great Moment and Best Feature Presentation) have been a long-time feature of our family history society. However, the number of members voting for these awards has been extremely low for the past few years. To find out why participation in the process represented a fraction of the total membership, the board asked for feedback concerning awards in the 2024 BIFHSGO Members Survey.

The results revealed that many members felt that they were not qualified or comfortable judging speakers, for various reasons. A significant number of respondents commented that all speakers should be recognized for their efforts. In fact, by the time the survey was conducted, the Board had already determined that the rating system used to calculate the winners was flawed and that changes were necessary.

The criteria used to determine the winner of an award was sound, but applying it across two electronic votes in the Spring and Fall, was problematic. We needed to find a solution that reflects the values of BIFHSGO which is sustainable for us as a volunteer organization and which provides suitable recognition for our members.

So, after careful consideration, the Board has decided to recognize all speakers, equally, for their contributions to the goals of the Society, at a Volunteer Recognition event and at the Annual General Meeting in June.

I have decided to step away from the Secretary role but will remain as a Director-at-large for 2025-2027 and look forward to contributing to the Society as we work towards meeting the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan 2024-2026.

Treasurer (Caroline Smallman)

In June 2024, I took over the position of Treasurer from Jennifer Hill. I would like to thank Jennifer and the Treasurer before Jennifer, Marianne Rasmus, for their assistance as I transitioned into the role. The 2024-25 year has been an interesting one, as I became more familiar with the range of BIFHSGO's activities and the responsibilities of the Treasurer.

2024 Financial Report

The financial statements have been prepared and reviewed by McCay Duff, LLP. The financial statements and the Independent Practitioner's Review Engagement Report are posted on the website. I provided requested information and analysis to the accountants and reviewed the draft trial balance and financial statements they provided.

Our net expenses (loss) for 2024 are \$2,940 versus net expenses (loss) of \$728 in 2023. Key variances in the Statement of Financial Position and the Statement of Operations are discussed below.

Proposal to Dispense with Public Accountant

We are experiencing increased cost pressures and have reviewed our expenditures with a view to identifying potential cost savings. One of our largest single expenses, at \$5,345 in 2024, is professional accounting fees for the preparation and review of our financial statements.

Our accountants informed us that this fee would increase by 10% beginning this year, and in each of the next two years. To save money this year, I completed and submitted the charity tax return (fee of \$750 charged by the public accountant in 2023).

The Board proposes that BIFHSGO dispense with the Public Accountant, and a motion will be presented at the AGM seeking unanimous approval of all members present to dispense with the appointment of a Public Accountant for the 2025 fiscal year.

Should the motion not be approved unanimously, the membership must pass a motion to appoint a Public Accountant to perform a review engagement. In readiness for this eventuality, I am currently investigating whether we can get this at a lower fee from a new accounting firm.

Treasurer's activities in 2024-2025:

- ❖ Implemented the re-investment of surplus cash in GICs over a 3-year time cycle.
- ❖ Worked with the bank to implement auto-deposit of etransfers.
- ❖ Prepared and filed the BIFHSGO Charity Tax Return
- ❖ Updated the listing of BIFHSGO non-depreciable assets.
- ❖ Acted as Conference Treasurer, developing the budget, processing registration payments and paying speakers and experts.
- ❖ Prepared the 2025 budget for Board approval.
- ❖ Recorded expenses and revenue.
- ❖ Accepted and deposited payments (membership and conference fees) and recorded in our financial records (QuickBooks).
- ❖ Prepared cheques and other payments to organizations providing goods and services to BIFHSGO and to reimburse Board members for payments made on behalf of BIFHSGO.
- ❖ Prepared monthly financial reports for the Board.
- ❖ Prepared and issued tax receipts for people who donated to BIFHSGO.
- ❖ Participated in strategic planning sessions.