

Anglo Scottish FHS Branch

Chairman's Annual Report for 2020

2020 has been a year that we will never forget, a year that we were pleased was over as we could see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel but then realised that the tunnel was still very long. We were introduced to new meanings for words such as 'lockdown' and some new words such as 'Zoom' and 'Covid' and the reality of self isolation.

The year started with our usual quiz and social get-together, Yvonne and Ina putting together a teasing quiz programme. I found my final results score a little higher than 2019, but then so was the average, the quiz masters realising that the questions should be a little easier. In February we were visited by Dr Alan Crosby who spoke about the Rickerby's of Dumfries and Cumbria and how so much faster was crossing the Solway rather than the arduous road trip.

Then it started. On the weekend of our March meeting the first lockdown was announced and the news that the Central Library was closing until further notice. Unsurprisingly this caused a flurry of activity from our meetings secretary Yvonne Gill-Martin, firstly deferring our planned talks until later in the year, (we naively expected the emergency to be short lived) then re-arranging them for 2021 and checking that the speaker was happy using Zoom online conferencing.

Our first cancelled meeting should have been our Annual Meeting. Following this cancellation, the committee agreed to continue in their positions for another year.

After a few experiments in using Zoom by the committee our first on-line meeting was held in November when Hilary Hartigan gave a presentation about the use of DNA in family history and why a cousin need not match with you. We then broke with tradition and held a meeting in December when Hilary again spoke about the Society's new website and the wealth of information contained within.

Throughout the year Mark Campbell managed each month to publish an edition of our newsletter, finding something interesting to include when the country was in lockdown. Mark is also the Branch Representative on the Society's Executive Committee.

Ina Penneyston acts as our representative on the council of the Scottish Association of Family History Societies (SAFHS) and keeps us and the Executive Committee informed of their activities. Like ourselves the SAFHS council have had to move their meetings online. Ina is also an elected member of the Society's Executive Committee.

In September the Society launched a new website, a mammoth task for a few MLFHS members, including our Hilary Hartigan, who is a very able webmaster for the branch, and we would be lost without her expertise and dedication in making our Branch pages so interesting.

We have not had the same opportunity to promote our Scottish Marriage Index to a wider audience through face to face contact as Family History Fairs countrywide were cancelled due to Covid restrictions. However, the Index was the subject of articles within our newsletter and the Manchester

Genealogist and we continue to get a trickle of new contributions and enquiries for further information of events recorded in the Index.

With the suspension of meetings at Central Library we have been unable to continue with the helpdesk held in the mornings of our meetings, but we have received and answered enquires for assistance via the contacts link within the new Society website. Likewise, the Society helpdesk was closed and beginners' talks suspended, so we were unable to give the session on Scottish Research.

For all these activities I am indebted to the contribution given by the Branch committee members, Yvonne Gill-Martin, Hilary Hartigan, Mark Campbell and Ina Penneyston, as already mentioned, but also the support from David Muil and Lind McInnes.