

# ORMSKIRK & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 25th MAY 2022

### Honorary Secretary's Report 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

This report incorporates the principal activities of the Society.

#### Accommodation

We continue to rent accommodation at the Scout HQ in Wigan Road, Ormskirk, which houses our Library, and gives us a room to do any necessary admin.

#### Membership

A report on our membership can be found at the end of the Accounts document.

#### The Library

The ODFHS Library continues to thrive due to some excellent donations this year, thank you to everyone who has contributed, members and non-members alike. As many of the recent additions have been in the form of ephemeral material (school and parish magazines, photographs, newspaper cuttings, bills of sale from local business etc.) we have been able to add considerably to the digital content of the ODFHS website. This is in both the "Gallery" section (mostly photographs which are available to everyone accessing the website) and the "Library Resources" section (in the members only area). We are particularly pleased to be able to offer access to digital library resources to members from afar who are unable to visit our Ormskirk-based library. Thank you to the team who have made this project possible.

The physical library remains available to members in the First Ormskirk Scout HQ on Wigan Road, Ormskirk, it is open by request.

Many thanks to Kathryn, our Librarian, in collecting and cataloguing all the donations we have received.

#### Publications & Sales

During the year our Sales List has been completely revamped to allow for digital downloads, both on our website and on the Parish Chest website. This makes life much easier for our sales team and has alleviated the need to constantly replenish our stock of data CD's. After a slow start to sales, we saw an increase following our attendance at the Virtual Family History Show, and again once the revamp of the sales list was completed. By the end of the year, we had realised around £300 in sales. Many thanks go to Alan Cooper for his expertise and work in this area, we couldn't have done it without him.

Our products can be viewed at <http://www.parishchest.com/ormskirk-district-fhs>

#### Research help

During the past year we have not held any help sessions in the library, however, early last year we introduced monthly Family History Chats on Zoom, and these have proved to be a useful forum to discuss all things family history, and allow us to answer many queries from both members and visitors, near and far. We are regularly joined by members in New Zealand, Australia and many areas of the UK. Thanks to all who have assisted with this.

#### Websites

No major issues. Over the past year we have continued routine maintenance and update of website content and appearance, including...

- Continuing additions to the Gallery and Video Archive pages.
- Updating the Magazine and Exchange Magazine archives.

- Sales catalogue (Shop page), now fully integrated with the Parish Chest site for ease of purchase, with automatic download of CDs in .zip format proving most popular.
- All CD data files now copied and stored securely on the website server for backup (Independent of Parish Chest copies).
- Boatfamilies TNG website updated (with Keith Jenkins) to correct some email contact and security issues. (Alan now set up as co-user of this site to facilitate this.)
- New member “welcome” letter revised so as to simplify provision of member website login details. Work continues to improve and enhance archive content and access for members and guests. This includes...
- Additions to the public access Gallery page, including new “Moment in time”, “Nurses of Ormskirk Hospital”, and “Who do you think they are?” mystery photo collections.
- Digitization/scanning of library items (members only - thanks to Kathryn/Keith) to back up archival material with online access for members. See the Members/Library Resources page to follow progress.

Alan Cooper – website manager – 16 May 2022

#### Boatfamilies website

Our main Boatfamilies tree increased by almost 3,000 people during the year to March 31 as we worked through the surge of additions from contributors during the pandemic, some again linking Lancashire and Yorkshire watermen’s families with those from elsewhere. We now include a Finnish mariner, John Erickson of Vaasa, whose daughter married into a Knottingley waterman's family.

We successfully upgraded the website software (thanks to our Webmaster Alan Cooper) and have refreshed the Welcome page with new images. There is now a protective procedure to prevent 'spam' messages getting through to our mail inbox.

Our two smaller trees - Canal 9 involving the Walls family of Gargrave, and Canal 10 (Clapham boatbuilders of Bingley) remain unconnected.

A huge thank you to both Alan Cooper and Keith Jenkins for all the work and effort they put into keeping our websites up to date. If you haven’t logged in to them lately, please have a look, as in the past 12 months an enormous amount of work has gone in to improving them. [www.odfhs.website](http://www.odfhs.website) [www.boatfamilies.website](http://www.boatfamilies.website)

#### Magazine

Between April 2020 and March 2021, we were only able to publish two editions (instead of our usual three); these contained 28 features by 17 contributors. By comparison, between April 2021 and March 2022, 26 items from 12 contributors were published. This “reduction” is due to members writing longer articles (two members have written two-part items), and also to adapting the magazine by replacing talk/event reports with alternative content (e.g., useful websites, transcriptions of historic material, zoom meeting reports) to help and inspire research when meetings were suspended.

The ongoing projects to update our website and expand our digital library, and the switch from CDs to digital downloads have inspired three separate articles, and contributed to the rise in the number of illustrations published. 6 items on a “Royal Events and Celebrations” theme have been received for the Summer 2022 magazine; 3 items on “Medicine, Surgery and Midwifery” for our Autumn edition have already come in.

Significant thanks are due to Pam Richardson and Kathryn MacDonald for taking up the duties of writing talk reports. Thanks to all who have sent material; suggestions for future themed articles are always welcome by post or at [editor@odfhs.email](mailto:editor@odfhs.email)

Many thanks to Kate Hurst who does a brilliant job as Editor of our magazine.

### **Facebook**

The Facebook page remains popular and receives a steady stream of enquiries about local and family history. It has been invaluable for sharing links to useful websites, new publications and projects from other family history societies, and showcasing items in the ODFHS digital library. Themed weeks dedicated to one topic (e.g., house history, views of the local area) have been fairly successful, and in December 2021 the “Advent Calendar” was adapted to feature useful free websites and articles about the history of Christmas. In May 2022, a short-notice message from an overseas visitor resulted in a brief guided walk to the parish church (conducted by one of our committee). Thanks to everyone who has liked and shared our posts, and especially to those who have sent interesting items for us to feature on the page.

### **YouTube**

Three new YouTube talks have been filmed since May 2021; two were made to tie in with national events (Heritage Open Days, Virtual Really Useful Show). It is hoped that at least two new ones can be made in 2022 - possible themes are recusancy in West Lancashire, and a demonstration of how different church records (e.g., Anglican, Catholic, Quaker) can provide different information. ODFHS member Stephen Huyton sent some material about the draining of Martin Mere, offering the option of a history/geography hybrid.

In early 2022, a donation of photos from Keith Howard inspired the Faces Of Westhead video, and (more recently) Susan Porter has sent photos of a boat family from Haskayne; hopefully, this will be used for a new “people and places” of Barton, Haskayne, Downholland and Halsall video. Any contributions (e.g., pictures of community events, weddings, public buildings, churches, pubs, school groups) will be gratefully accepted at editor@odfhs.email

A special private video was made to mark our Welcome Back meeting; a link is in the members-only section of our website. Our most popular video is Ormskirk and District People and Places (1985 views); five others have been watched at least 1000 times each.

### **Monthly Meetings**

At the beginning of last year, the Covid situation was such that face-to-face meetings were not advisable, but we were able to hold our monthly meetings via Zoom, which allowed members from outside the West Lancs area to join in. We have regularly had members from all around the country and overseas joining in with these meetings, but were also very aware that for many members Zoom was not an option. Those who were able to join us heard talks on various subjects, including DNA, Crosby Fort and the History of your House.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 we held our first face to face meeting in the Guide Hut, when we took the opportunity to remember Bill Huyton, our late Chairman. We were pleased that his nephew, David Huyton, was able to attend and we were delighted to be given a bequest of £10,000 from Bill’s estate.

Many thanks to all of the Committee who have contributed presentations to these meetings, and also to our Programme Secretary Dot who has provided an excellent programme of talks for the coming year.

### **The Executive Committee**

Over the past year, your committee met on 4 occasions via Zoom. Using Zoom allows members who don’t live locally to attend, which gives us easier access to their knowledge and expertise, which has proved to be of great value. From reading this

Report you will have seen that much work has gone on behind the scenes to update lots of areas of our website and how we operate.

As the Covid pandemic continued there were very few outside events that we could have attended, but we did, once again, attend the Virtual Family History Show.

Whilst we did not receive many visitors on the day, the upturn in sales following the show was very pleasing. Work on Halsall Parish Church and Christ Church in Aughton continue, having been on hold during the winter months. Any help which you can offer with these projects would be greatly appreciated.

As for the Committee, we welcomed Norma Gregson and Keith Broadbent at the last AGM and their contribution has been much appreciated. Andrew Scarisbrick, a longstanding member of the Committee, has sadly been unable to attend too often due to work commitments and has now decided to resign. We must thank him for all his commitment to the Society in the past, and wish him well in the future. This leaves a vacancy on the Committee and we would be happy to hear from anyone who would like to join us. Also, we would like to thank Kathy Isherwood for the lovely scones and helping with the teas for several years. This role has now been taken over by Jackie James and Julie Broadbent.

Most importantly, I wish to thank you, our members, for your continued support. The past couple of years haven't been easy for anyone but things seem to be improving now. We hope to be able to attend various Community Events this coming year, which will help us to publicise and grow the Society. Extra hands are always welcome at these events, and we'd love to have some of you join us.

Pam Richardson  
19<sup>th</sup> May 2022