



British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa

2022–2023 Annual Reports

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

10 JUNE 2023

President—Dianne Brydon

What a year we have had. We met together in person for the first time in more than 18 months. We moved from virtual to hybrid monthly meetings with great success. We organized an in-person workshop with the Ulster Historical Foundation in March. We built the program for our 2023 conference “Leaving Their Scottish Homes: What Were They Thinking?” Our special interest groups (SIGs)—British Colonial America, DNA, London and Writing—are strong and well supported by the volunteers who organize them and the loyal members who participate. We published four editions of the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR) journal. Our newly formatted web site continued to evolve. Work on the various BIFHSGO research projects continued.

Our focus this year was on offering a strong program, and ensuring our members were well informed about it. I commend Marianne Rasmus, Director of Programs, for adapting our monthly meetings to the hybrid format in a facility that was guaranteed to support it; and for finding excellent speakers. Marianne did double duty in March as she also organized the Irish Family History Research Day. She was ably supported by David Jeanes and Barbara Tose who masterfully coordinated the technical side of things throughout.

A small team comprised of Suzanne Dawes, Sheila Dohoo Faure and I coordinated the calendar of timely and consistent messaging about BIFHSGO activities across all media—e-mails, regular newsletters, web site, social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter), and monthly meeting rolling announcements.

I invite you to read the director and volunteer reports for an idea of the range and extent of BIFHSGO’s activities and the number of people who give their time to deliver them. You will sometimes see the same names mentioned in several different capacities, as many of our volunteers serve in double, triple and sometimes quadruple capacities. To those of you who already voluntarily serve our Society, I am immensely grateful for all the time and effort that you contribute. However, to run our Society most effectively, we need more of our members to step up and help out; your contributions can be large or small—every bit helps. Perhaps your name will be included in next year’s report?

Board

We delivered our various activities with two vacancies in named directorships on the Board. Our bylaws state there should be “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 know from experience that having fewer directors means more work for those who remain and/or fewer activities undertaken. This year the Outreach and Communications chairs remained vacant and I thank the other Board members who stepped in to help fill the gaps, in addition to fulfilling their own roles. Our monthly discussions covered all range of topics and I valued our collaborative approach.

This year the Board says goodbye to Gillian Leitch, who has served as its Secretary; to Suzanne Dawes who served as director-at-large and Newsletter Editor; and to Ken McKinlay who served as Director of Research and Projects. We are grateful to them for their time and are enriched by their contribution to our Board discussions.

Our most recent appeal for directors has resulted in four people (so far) agreeing to run for office: one will take on Research and Projects, and three will serve as directors-at-large. The Board will have ten directors, with the Outreach Chair still vacant. This vacancy means that we are not actively liaising with fellow organizations in the heritage field in Ottawa, nor with the family history community further afield. In addition, Marianne Rasmus is entering her eighth year on the Board. As our by-laws allow directors to serve a maximum of four two-year terms, Marianne must retire after the 2023–24 season. The ideal solution would be for someone to join the Board as a director-at-large this year, learn the ropes from Marianne, and step into the Program role next year.

If either of these roles interest you, please contact Duncan Monkhouse at pastpresident@bifhsgo.ca.

Partnerships

BIFHSGO continues our partnerships with the Ottawa Public Library and City of Ottawa Archives. With our evolution to hybrid meetings, the availability of the Zoom platform for SIGs to hold their meetings online, and our move to Knox Presbyterian Church for monthly meetings, we did not need to use rooms offered by the Ottawa Public Library or the Ottawa City Archives. Over the next year I will be working with both of these organizations to update our partnership arrangements.

Volunteers

We continue to be blessed with a core group of active members who are willing to 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.

There is no shortage of activities that 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.

In Memoriam

This past year we lost several valued members who served our organization in a variety of capacities over the years. We recognize Cliff Adams, Bill Arthurs, Gary Bagley, Lynne Baxter, Bert Renwick and Betty Warburton for their dedication and support; each of them either served on the Board, or started a SIG, or worked on one of our research projects, or

in some other volunteer capacity. If there are others who gave time and dedication to BIFHSGO, and about whose passing we are not aware, we also acknowledge them.

2022 Conference (Sheila Dohoo Faure / Duncan Monkhouse)

The BIFHSGO 2022 Annual Conference, “England and Wales: at home and on the move” was held from 28 September to 2 October 2022, following our first very successful online conference in 2021. The program theme was selected based on the standard BIFHSGO rotation of conference topics of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, with “migration” as the secondary theme.

Four conference days were scheduled on five days spread over a week. Three presentations were offered each day; and “Connect” sessions—Conference (for presenters), Society (for society exhibitors) and Vendors (for providers of genealogy services and products)—were spread among them. Videos of the presentations (and handouts, when available) were made available to registrants until 31 October 2022.

Paid registrants numbered 165, with BIFHSGO realizing a profit of \$2,400.

A survey conducted following the Conference received a 49 percent response rate, thus providing valuable input that has helped us plan the 2023 Conference. Of note, only 20 percent of respondents (in October 2022) said they would attend an in-person conference.

A total of 20 volunteers worked to deliver the Conference, from initial planning at the beginning until the survey was complete and the final report submitted. We are deeply grateful for the time they contributed between January and October.

Program (Marianne Rasmus)

As health protocols were lifted in response to the changing pandemic, the biggest change and challenge for BIFHSGO’s 2022–2023 program year was the move to hybrid meetings. The hybrid format afforded those who felt comfortable and wanted to meet in person the opportunity to do so, while providing an option to those who still preferred to meet online. Moving to hybrid monthly meetings also ensured that BIFHSGO continued to provide live programming and engagement for members living outside the Ottawa area.

Adopting the hybrid format required the assessment of equipment needs and technical logistics, as well as finding a venue that could accommodate the new requirements, particularly a reliable Internet connection. Sincere thanks go to David Jeanes and Barbara Tose, who worked tirelessly to learn the new system and who continue to provide on-site technical support, as well as to Ken McKinlay, who has acted as both host and support for those joining our meetings virtually. Their assistance in navigating the new technical realities, in a new meeting location, has been invaluable.

For the first time since February 2020, just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, BIFHSGO held its first hybrid meeting in September 2022 and provided the first opportunity for members to meet in person. Meetings continued with the hybrid format throughout the year with the exception of January and February, when we met only online to avoid possible weather disruptions.

Date	Presentation	Speaker(s)	Title of Webinar(s)	Attendance
SEP 10 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK		Open Mic	Total: 101 Online: 71 In person: 30 Members: 85 Non-Members: 16
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Suzanne Lesage Laughlin McKinnon	
OCT 8 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Nancy Conroy	From Derry to the Pontiac – A Publishing Journey	Total: 87 Online: 67 In person: 20 Members: 75 Non-Members: 12
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Bruce Elliott Alfred Guidal and his land occupancy maps of Ontario	
NOV 12 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Melanie Morin-Pelletier	Anxious Mothers, Voluntary Aid Workers and Military Nurses: Letters from Canadian women during the First World War	Total 125 In person: 25 Online: 100 Members: 100 Non-Members: 25
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Carol Annett Stories from the War	
9:00 a.m. DEC 10	CHRISTMAS SOCIAL			
10:00 a.m.	GREAT MOMENTS	John McConkey (Virtual)	Maggie McConkey - what became of you?	Total: 140 In person: 33 Online: 107 Members: 122 Non-Members: 18
		Duncan Monkhouse	The Wright Way	
		Marianne Rasmus	Ella's Story: The Final Piece: Time & Place	
JAN 14 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Robert Urquhart (Virtual only)	Scotland's Places	Total 222 Members: 141 Non-Members 81
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Wesley Johnston (Virtual only) Untangling "Family Thickets": Cornwall to Canada	
FEB 11 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Dr. Brian Gurrin (Virtual only)	Census Records in the Virtual Treasury of Ireland	Total: 236 Members: 127 Non-Members: 109
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Dianne Brydon (Virtual only) Lust, Lucre and Lybell: An 18th Century Soap Opera	
MAR 11 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Shirley Monkhouse	Tips For Genetic Genealogy DNA Research and Irish Case Studies	Total: 199 In person: 24 Online: 175 Members: 121 Non-Members: 78
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Shirley Monkhouse They heard a shot.... after this, things get confusing	
MAR 25	SPECIAL EVENT	Ulster Historical Foundation	Irish Family History Research Day	Registrants: 107
APR 8 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Kyla Ubbink	Practical tips for repair and care of family treasures	Total: 124 In-person: 20 Online: 104 Members: 75 Non-Members: 45
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Glenn Wright Canadians on Vimy Ridge, April 1917: Resources and Research	
MAY 13 9:00 a.m.	EDUCATION TALK	Dena Palamedes	Zotero - Reasons Why You Need It While Doing Your Family History Research	Total: 135 In-person: 17 On-line: 118 Members: 78 Non-Members: 57
	10:00 a.m.	FEATURE TALK	Brian Laurie Beaumont New Netherland Roots of Canadians	

JUN 10 9:00 a.m.	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING		
	GREAT MOMENTS	Jane Simpson	Finding Charity Gerow
Paul Cripwell		Introducing the Cripwells	
Susan Smart		A Family Mystery Solved through Research and DNA	
Carol Annett		Finding Archy Ban Egypt	
10:00 a.m.			

The hybrid format has also required flexibility and creativity. At the outset, the focus was to feature speakers who could present in-person, and this year all feature presentations were given by BIFHSGO members, several sharing stories they had uncovered or written during the pandemic. The online-only meetings in January and February featured excellent education talks from speakers living in Scotland and Ireland, as well as a feature presentation by a BIFHSGO member living in California. Two hybrid open-mic sessions allowed attendees to interact in person and online. During the education talk in September, members shared discoveries made during the pandemic. The December holiday social featured a *Holiday Show & Tell*, with participants in the room and online telling some of their families' holiday traditions; the December Great Moments session also featured speakers both in the room and online.

In March, BIFHSGO held an in-person special event with Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt of the Ulster Historical Foundation who were visiting Ottawa for the first time in five years. The talks were very informative and well received. About a quarter of the participants responded to the post-event survey; of those, 85 percent reported the event completely met their expectations and 92 percent said they found the information useful.

Monthly meetings have continued to attract people from outside the Ottawa area, with attendees from across North America and the British Isles. At the time of this report, the average meeting attendance is 155 and has consisted of both members and non-members. In-person attendance averages 25 and online attendance averages 130.

In September 2022, honoraria offered to speakers were as follows:

- hour-long feature presentations \$100
- 30-minute education talks \$50
- Great Moments \$25 each

The new budget in January 2023 saw the honoraria increased to:

- hour-long feature presentations \$125
- 30-minute education talks \$75

Tasks performed by the Program Director included organizing the monthly program for both education talks and feature presentations, finding speakers, and attending monthly board meetings. The Program Director also collected presentation abstracts and speakers' biographies and ensured that they were posted on the web site and forwarded to the ACR Editor. In addition, she forwarded program-related communications for inclusion in the monthly newsletter; coordinated with the treasurer respecting 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 letters of thanks to the speakers; and created follow-up e-mails to participants.

Patricia Grainger, Director-at-large assisted by sending invitations to members to attend our monthly meetings, and sending follow-up e-mails thanking participants and attaching any handouts provided by the speakers. She also calculated the attendance, both in-person and online.

In closing, I want to express my thanks to all our members for their patience as we worked out some of the kinks both with new equipment, a new meeting format, and the new space. A special thank you is also forwarded to all those members who have been willing to share their inspirational stories over this past year. For those who may yet have a story to tell but need or want assistance in the preparation process, BIFHSGO has experienced speakers who are willing to share their skills and expertise with you. Speaker ideas and suggestions are always welcome and can be forwarded to the Program Director at programs@bifhsgo.ca.

Membership (Anne Coulter)

Number of Memberships by Type						
Category	Yr. 2020	Yr. 2021	Yr. 2022	Yr. 2023	Change from Yr. 2022	
Individual	369	349	337	300	-37	
Family	61	54	47	25	-22	
Organizational	15	8	7	5	-2	
Total	445	426	391	330	-61	
% individual members Ottawa area			68	68	0	
% individual members Outside Ottawa			27	26	-1	
% individual members Outside Canada			5	6	1	

Membership numbers for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 up to April 30

The pandemic continued to have an impact on our organization and we sought to provide options for the members to participate. This accommodated the members living in the Ottawa area (68 percent) as well as the 26 percent coming from other parts of Canada and about 6 percent from outside Canada.

In September 2022 we began to offer hybrid monthly meetings, that is, meetings that are both in-person and virtual using Zoom. A welcome desk was established for the in-person meetings and on average about 25 people attended the meetings. Participation online continued to be a popular option and was well supported with between 100 and 155 people attending each time. During the pandemic many organizations shifted to virtual

meetings and seminars, offering easy access to information about U.K. genealogy and this increased competition probably adversely affected our membership numbers.

The change in the membership fee structure, adopted in 2022, eliminated the family membership category and grandfathered any existing family memberships. In 2023 several members with a family membership migrated to the individual type and over time it is expected that the number of family memberships will continue to decrease.

In September 2022 we introduced the option for people to pay their membership fees by using eTransfer. About 15 percent of people (49) used the eTransfer option, 80 percent (262) used PayPal, and 5 percent (16) paid by cheque.

The number of members opting for a slightly reduced membership fee and receipt of an electronic versus printed version of the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* quarterly journal, held steady from 2022 to 2023; 63 percent of the membership read an electronic copy online instead of receiving the paper version by mail. This preference has allowed us to save on printing and mailing costs.

Communications

Website (Sheila Dohoo Faure)

The web site is our central communications hub. All BIFHSGO products and activities are hosted there, and all messages to members link back to this content. Information about events, monthly meeting announcements, notable news, videos, newsletters and the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* (ACR) quarterly journal was updated and posted regularly. The web site provides a forum for members to interact with BIFHSGO through surveys and other forms.

This year's new features included: a regular feature "Behind the News" page to promote content on the web site with a different focus every two months; and a searchable index of ACR issues (1999–2023) by article title, author, issue date/number. A public index of videos that are available to members has been started.

To find this content, the web manager has created and posted instructions to facilitate members using the web site and managing their BIFHSGO accounts.

The web manager supports many BIFHSGO activities, such as creating and managing the 2022 Conference pages and registration system, and setting up the 2023 membership products to support the membership director with the renewal and purchase of new memberships.

Newsletter (Sue Dawes)

Sue Dawes continued in the role of editor of BIFHSGO's monthly newsletter. The newsletter is e-mailed to the membership and to non-members who have asked to be on the distribution list. Recent surveys have shown that the newsletter is the members' primary communication source for BIFHSGO news.

Regular Communications with Members (Duncan Monkhouse)

Each month members receive an invitation to the upcoming monthly meeting and a newsletter just days before it. 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 call for nominations to the Hall of Fame, or the official notice of the AGM.

Social Media (Dianne Brydon)

Our long-time social media coordinator, Gwen Gibson, retired in October 2022. We thank her for her focus on regularly posting news about BIFSHGO activities, and information from other organizations that might be of interest to BIFSHGO members who follow us. Since then, the Society's president has been feeding this hungry beast with two or three messages each week, especially with notices or reminders in advance of BIFHSGO events.

Queries (Sheila Dohoo Faure)

As a result of the information on our web site and our communications activities, we receive many requests for information from members and non-members around the world. This past year we responded to 340 enquiries through the website. The 170 unique queries included topics related to British home children (about 33 percent); the website (25 percent); other online assets, donations or general research questions (18 percent); and offers of talks and requests for contacts/newsletters from other societies (25 percent). A handful of queries were received through our Facebook account as well.

Outreach (Dianne Brydon)

In-person events resumed this year following the COVID hiatus. As the Outreach Director's chair was vacant, we did not have the resources to proactively liaise with sister organizations. The BIFHSGO Board participated in two events, Heritage Day on February 20 at Ottawa City Hall, and the Ottawa Public Library Genealogy Day on May 1, where we engaged with several participants. Thanks to Suzanne Dawes, Anne Coulter and Patricia Grainger for their assistance.

Research and Projects (Ken McKinlay)

This year Patricia Roberts-Pichette's work on British Home Children continued with the completion of the *Research Guide to the Name and Reference Index of the Children's (Middlemore) Emigration Homes and its Sources*. This Research Guide is a detailed work that covers the various collections available for those researching children who settled in Canada through the efforts of John T. Middlemore and the staff of the Children's (Middlemore) Emigration Homes (CEH) between 1873 and 1933. In addition to her work on the Guide, Patricia has provided updated references in the BIFHSGO Name Index for CEH records that are held only at the Wolfson Centre in Birmingham, England.

John Sayers continues leading his multi-year effort of coordinating the indexing of Home Children found in the records from the "Immigration Program: Headquarters central registry files" on RG 76 microfilms that are held by Library and Archives Canada and are available in a digitized format on the CRKN Héritage web site.

Work on compiling biographies of WW I soldiers who died at the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station continued this year. The team of four, comprising Nigel Lloyd, Heather Carmody, Marcia Clement and Sheila Dohoo Faure with editor Jean Kitchen, has now completed 74 percent of the names in the index. One biography usually appears in each issue of the *Anglo-Celtic Roots* quarterly journal.

With the City of Ottawa Archives once again reopened to researchers, BIFHSGO members were able to use the collections in the Reading Room. BIFHSGO continued to provide resources for the Ontario Genealogical Society (*Ontario Ancestors*)–Ottawa Branch (OBOGS) library in the form of volunteers and funds for the acquisition of books and other materials, including journals provided through membership or exchange arrangements with other societies. BIFHSGO also renewed a subscription to *The British Newspaper Archive* site for use by in-person visitors to the City of Ottawa Archives reading room. We are grateful to BIFHSGO member Pam Cooper for her work with Grace Lewis to manage the OBOGS collection and for writing articles in ACR highlighting the new and existing research resources that might be useful to our members.

Legacy Family Tree Webinars has offered BIFHSGO members a 50 percent discount for first-year subscribers to this amazing body of genealogy webinars. Details about this offer can be found under “Member Announcements” on the BIFHSGO web site.

Finally, I will not be seeking another term on the BIFHSGO Board but instead will continue to work behind the scenes where needed. I want to thank all those on the Board and those who have guided me in my term for their kind and generous assistance.

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

BIFHSGO’s quarterly journal publishes articles written by our members about many aspects of their family histories and their research. In the past year, eight articles appeared from seven authors. Time periods covered ranged from the late 1700s to post-WW II. We met characters and heroes, learned of struggles for a better life through relocation and trade unionism, and traveled around the world in the process. Most of our authors were well known to readers of ACR. This year we welcomed a new writer, Veronica Scrimger, with an interesting tale about her great-grandfather. Thank you to the authors who submitted their items for publication last year. We always welcome articles from any of our members.

For several years now we have also been publishing biographies (one per quarter) of those individuals who died at the No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station during World War I. These articles are written by a small group of volunteers who research and compile the biographies so that these people will not be forgotten. Last year our soldiers’ biographies were written by Heather Carmody, Nigel Lloyd, Marcia Clements, and Sheila Dohoo Faure, who, along with her many other duties for BIFHSGO, leads this tiny band of writers and chooses which biographies will appear in ACR.

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 web site. Non-members have access to complete issues up to 2019 and the list of contents for 2020–2023. According to the membership report, 63 percent of members now receive the quarterly journal only 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 2022 will be announced at the June AGM. My thanks to those members who agreed to act as judges this year.

As editor, I rely on several people in the production of the journal. In particular, I would like to thank Christine Jackson, who not only writes stories for ACR, but also assists me with editing and other production tasks. Sheila Dohoo Faure and Anne Renwick are the regular proofreaders who catch my mistakes before going to print. Ann Burns takes care of mailing copies to our U.S. and international members. John Reid continues to contribute material to support ACR and our members with his regular column, *Cream of the Crop*. However, it would all be pointless without the members who faithfully read—and, hopefully, enjoy— the journal every quarter. Thank you for your continued support.