

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE
(Charity no. 515168)

Trustees' Annual Report to the Charity Commission for the Year 2022-2023

OBJECTS

The object of the charity is to advance the education of the public in the study of family history in all its many aspects.

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The charity is an unincorporated association governed by its constitution, originally set up around 1969 and currently the "1999 Constitution as amended 20th October 2001 and 30th October 2021".

CONTROL

Management of the Society is vested by the constitution in the trustees who are members of the executive committee, which meets three times a year, and consists of:

(a) Officers elected at the AGM:

Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer

and

Some Officials appointed to specific posts within the society

(b) Co-opted members and those who fill any casual vacancy

(c) One delegate representative from each of the 12 Local Groups and the Computer Club.

All trustees are unpaid.

Many committee members have individual responsibility for the day-to-day operations of specific functions. Reporting is via their membership of the Society's executive committee, supplemented in some cases by written reports. Sub-committees are sometimes set up to deal with particular issues.

In the Spring of 2021, following advice from the Federation of Family History Societies, the Trustees and the Executive Committee reviewed the governance model to ensure that it reflected changes in the format of meetings and administrative procedures during the pandemic. They were also mindful that some of these changes had proved beneficial and that the Society's Constitution and governance model should be amended to enable the Society to benefit from the wider opportunities presented by the digital age. The amendments to the Society's administrative and meeting procedures and protocols included the ability to hold Annual General Meetings and other meetings on-line as well as in person, to vary the timings of meetings in exceptional circumstances, and to allow flexibility in the time periods for tenure of offices. These were presented to the Annual General Meeting on 30th October 2021 and were approved by those attending.

TRUSTEES

The Chairman for the reporting period 2022-2023 was Robert Alan Bennett of 8 Barford Drive, Lowton, Warrington WA3 1DD.

The charity's principal address is that of the Mobberley Research Centre, Rajar Building, Town Lane, Mobberley, WA16 7ER.

A list of the trustees is attached. It contains names of those who held that position during the financial year and who have continued up to the date of this document.

PLANNING

The bulk of the Society's activities are planned in advance. However, some aspects of the society's activities are necessarily opportunistic rather than susceptible to considered planning. For example, library acquisitions depend on available funds and suitable works and collections coming up for sale or storage in an archive.

ADVISERS

The society is a member of the Federation of Family History Societies (FFHS). Membership brings with it advice on matters relevant to the conduct of the society's affairs, either from FFHS staff or from their legal advisers or insurers. The Society contracts out some accounting functions and this may include an element of advice. Advice is sometimes sought from members of the society who have suitable expertise.

RISK

There appear to be no major risks to which the Society is exposed that are not covered by the insurance arranged through the FFHS. Assets insurance is provided by Aviva Insurance.

DATA PROTECTION

The Society is committed to complying with all relevant data protection legislation.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

The constitution calls for an independent examiner or auditor to be appointed. The independent examiner for the period was Messrs. Heywood Shepherd, Chartered Accountants, 1 Park St, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 6SR.

ACCOUNTS

The accounts are presented on an accruals basis. The central accounts have been consolidated with the accounts of the computer club and the 12 local groups to generate the annual financial report. The Society is not registered for VAT, but is registered for VATMOSS in the Republic of Ireland for digital sales in the EU. The Trustees have noted that there has been no review of the methodology used for depreciation of the value of tangible fixed assets for some time and this will be addressed during 2023-24.

RESERVES

The total monetary assets (Net Current Assets) in the consolidated accounts are shown as:

£158,745

The committee has determined (report, December 1999) that the reserves within its central accounts should be targeted at between one third and two thirds of its annual subscription. These reserves consist of: working capital; funds for the purchase of research materials; equipment; renewal provision; and provision for unforeseen expenditure. For the year ending 30th June 2023 the annual subscription income was £22,469. Reserves are currently in excess of target. The trustees are satisfied that the reserves policy is appropriate and the level of reserves this year is suitable for the prevailing circumstances. A review of the reserves policy is however planned for 2023-2024.

PUBLIC BENEFIT REPORTING REQUIREMENT

The next section charts the activities of the Society during the reporting year. This has been prepared with regard to the guidance in the Charity Commission's brochure PB1 "Charities and Public Benefit" published in September 2013.

ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS and PUBLIC BENEFIT 2022-23

During the reporting year 2022-23, the Society has fully resumed all activities which had been paused during the pandemic, including the operation of its family history research centres at

Mobberley and Crewe and local group meetings. Additionally, the Cheshire Family History Seminar Series of on-line talks and presentations by nationally known figures, which commenced in the autumn of 2021 with monthly meetings, has continued to be well-attended and widely praised for its accessibility to members from outside Cheshire, including overseas members. There is a full programme for 2023-2024, enhanced by additional online Cheshire Research Seminar Buddies allowing interaction between members both in and outside Cheshire with similar interests in geographical areas of the county. The Society's Executive Committee meetings have also continued to be held online, an advantage since its membership is drawn from all parts of the historic County of Cheshire. Attendance at the 2023 Annual General Meeting also showed continuation of the trend for greater engagement by members now that its business, preceded by a talk given by a nationally known speaker was held on line.

Membership

A substantial percentage of the members now join via the internet and this facilitates our ability to address a geographically wide public. The Society has updated its membership forms to meet the changes required by the new GDPR regulations. A gradual decline in membership over recent years is a matter of concern to the Society. Renewals in 2023 continued to reflect that decline although many members continue to express their appreciation of the Society's response to the pandemic and to the new opportunities provided by online meetings. New members have joined as interest in family history expanded during the last two years. The challenge is to retain them. Given the circumstances membership numbers have held up well, supported by significant improvements in the arrangements for new members. A major review of the Society's activities and offerings has been initiated during 2023 and it is anticipated that this will lead to enhancements to be made during 2024 which it is hoped will encourage both retention of current members and recruitment of new members.

Mobberley Research Centre

The Mobberley Research Centre is at The Rajar Building, Town Lane, Mobberley, WA16 7ER. These premises provide light and bright accommodation, good access and space for the Society's extensive collection of documents and computer resources.

The Rajar Building is owned by Mobberley Parish Council and was the subject of refurbishment with the aid of an S106 agreement following planning permission for new homes in the village. A new lease agreement between the Parish Council and the Society was signed in 2023.

The Research Centre is staffed by volunteers and is overseen by a Management Committee.

The Centre is the focus of our service provision, providing an invaluable resource for the Society in general and for members at the eastern side of the county in particular. It is open to non-members for a small donation. The multifunctional machines that handle media and copying continue to reinforce their value to the society and to make the wide range of resources available for research. The turnover of volunteers, who provide advice and support for visitors, to staff the centre remains low but, when people move on, it is usually possible to find suitable new volunteers. The Centre continues to respond to the increase in on-line genealogical information although *Find My Past*, *Ancestry* and *The Genealogist* websites, remain the preferred and cost-effective sites accessed by subscription, together with access to the many free to search sites.

Crewe Family History Unit

This is based in the Crewe Municipal Building, in rooms provided by Cheshire East Council. It holds a good cross section of research material including free access to the same websites as the Mobberley Research Centre, local parish registers, an extensive library and the Crewe

and District and South East Cheshire local history archives. The Unit is run by volunteers and opens two days a week and on occasional Saturdays. The Unit also has a space for talks and displays.

The Society has been heavily involved in collaboration with Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALs) in the development of plans for the new Crewe history centre and it is anticipated that the Family History Unit will in due course relocate into the new centre. Discussions with CALs are also ongoing with regard to the options open to the Society to be involved in the similar developments for the new Chester history centre.

Internet presence

The Society's internet played a vital part in its response to the challenges of the pandemic and it has continued to provide an invaluable line of communication to members. There is a monthly newsletter, sent out to all members for whom it has an email address. This gives information, news and hints, advising members of upcoming events in the family history world and links to useful websites. The Society's presence on Facebook and Twitter has been enhanced and consolidated proving a valuable resource for members and non-members alike. All these areas of online activity are constantly reviewed and updated to ensure that the best information and encouragement is given.

The Society's website itself is reviewed constantly to allow improvement and updates following feedback from users. It is accessed by members and non-members alike. The Webmaster and his Web Assistant have ensured that members are fully cognisant of the opportunities the site offers. All group leaders can manage their own web presence in a time efficient way providing members with information about group activities and other local events and projects. Such activities, and the broader opportunities now available, enhance membership of the Society. Easily accessible information available on line for the general public raises the Society's profile and encourages new members to join and to pursue the study of family history. An active online Forum allows members and non-members to raise issues and problems they are facing in their research and to discuss possible solutions with other users. New members can thus benefit from the experience of others. The Members' only section of the site gives them access to documentation relevant to the society's activities. After an extensive, and ongoing, digitisation of its resources the Society's online shop offers a wide range of digitised resources for download and CDs for which it owns the copyright and other items of interest to family historians. The website also has links to other relevant family history sites where members and the general public can pursue their research. All of this benefits the society's members and researchers worldwide.

The Society also hosts and manages the website for the North West Group of Family History Societies.

Electronic projects

Electronic records of Cheshire related material are produced from the projects undertaken by our groups, volunteers, members and others. Microfiche and CD/DVD resources are being replaced as more of the Society's resources are digitised for download through the online shop and for placement on commercial family history sites.

Local Groups

The Society's local groups provide a focus for people in specific localities in Cheshire. A popular and important part of our work is undertaken by these groups, with group committee members providing local knowledge, organising talks (either face-to-face, online or a mixture of the two), undertaking the collection of data and making this available worldwide, and helping members and the public with their research at local help desks in libraries and other community facilities. In the 2022-2023 reporting year the Society had 12 Local Groups

operating across the historic County of Cheshire. Sadly, a lack of volunteers to run its Bramhall group led to the group's closure in November 2022, but members of the group were offered the opportunity to transfer to other local groups.

The Computer Club

The Computer Club plays an important role in providing advice on all aspects of the digital world, holding regular meetings to address current issues and problems and to look at new initiatives and sources of information relevant to family historians.

The Computer Club pioneered the use of online meetings discovering that more people attended than did a physical meeting and that members from all over the country, and elsewhere in the world, were willing and able to interact with the Society. Online working has also enabled small groups with particular interests to be formed which can then feed back to the Club and the Society.

Magazine

The society's magazine, the *Cheshire Ancestor*, remains a focus of communication with our members. It is produced quarterly and continues to be both entertaining and a mine of useful information. It has won the Federation of Family History Societies' "*Elizabeth Simpson Award*" several times for the best magazine. As a result of increased publishing and postage costs members have the opportunity of receiving an electronic version of the magazine at a lower subscription rate but a significant number of members prefer to continue to receive the magazine in paper format. The journal is distributed to the major libraries, archive offices and local studies libraries throughout the historic county of Cheshire covering the following modern local authority areas: Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Wirral, Halton, Stockport, Trafford and Tameside. It is hoped that this will raise the Society's profile and attract members from those who are using these resource centres at the beginning of their family history journey.

Transcription, indexing and publications

Considerable time and effort continues to be put in by members to projects for the transcription and/or indexing of all sorts of written historical records and also of gravestones, war memorials and other relevant data. This benefits all those in this country and overseas who have Cheshire ancestry. The publication of these results online as downloads through the Society's online shop, in book form, or as CDs enables access for those who are unable to visit local Cheshire facilities through disability or distance. This is a public service that most or all family history societies, and other historical organisations, undertake.

Lectures

The Society is always ready to provide speakers to educate the public at formal education establishments or at meetings of other organisations, including those that do not have a historical focus. Our own meetings often include speakers on wider aspects of social, local, national and international history that put family history in context. These local group meetings are advertised locally and non-members are invited to attend. Beginner's days are run in various parts of the county and Family History Awareness and Heritage Days are run in local libraries and churches by group members of our society. Family history classes are also run at our research centre. The Society continues to investigate ways in which this part of its activities could be moved online.

Help Desk Advice

Some of our groups provide a help desk service in their local library and other community facilities for members of the public who are interested in tracing their family tree or need on-going advice. This service is for members and non-members alike, and is resuming after the pandemic restrictions.

Existing Services

Recent restrictions have limited the existing activities and services, for example book stall, journal distribution, evening classes in family history, day schools for beginners, group meetings, open days, publicity and research advice. These activities will continue to provide the backbone of our services and support to members and, through their endeavours, the wider public. A look-up service using our transcription records has been established at the Research Centre available to members. The online Forum and the website itself are another valuable tool for family historians, members and non-members alike and is proving an effective means of extending the services the Society can provide.

Co-operation with others

The society is a member of the Federation of Family History Societies and of the North West Group of Family History Societies and liaises with other family history societies, local Registrars, local studies officers and the media. There is good co-operation with the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALS) and the Society continues to be actively engaged in the ongoing consultation on the future of the archive service within Cheshire and the role that the Society can have in these future developments. A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed with both the Cheshire Local Authorities as part of the bid for Heritage Lottery Funding for the Archives Project. The Society also works with the Wirral Archives Services, is a member of the Cheshire Local History Association and the Lancashire Parish Registers Society.

Volunteer Activities

The Society can only function through the work of its volunteers. A survey undertaken in the 2017-2018 reporting year indicated over 20,000 hours contributed by volunteers, equivalent to around 12 full time staff and over £150,000 at the national minimum wage. The Trustees would wish to acknowledge the debt that is owed to all those who give willingly of their time to further the objectives of the Society and for the benefit of the public.

Review

A primary aim of the committee is to maximise both the services available to members and the services that members provide to the public at large. The way in which these services are undertaken is reviewed regularly to ensure that advantage is taken of new opportunities.

ATTACHMENTS

List of trustees during the financial year ending 30th June 2023.

DECLARATION

Signed with the authority of the trustees,

Margaret Roberts
Chair

FHSC Trustee List

Those who occupied a position as Trustee of the Family History Society of Cheshire for the Reporting Year 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023:

BENNETT Robert Alan,
DAVENPORT Peter,
GUYTON David,
HAMILTON Sheila,
JOHNSON Geoff,
JONES, Sheila
LAIDLAW Jean,
MARTIN Howard,
MITCHELL, Sheila,
MOORE Angela,
OLIVER Gay,
ROWLEY, Peter,
RUGMAN Rev Hazel,
SANT, Anthony,
SPATE Margaret,
SMETHAM David,
SMETHAM Lesley
THOMAS David,
WRIGHT Robert.

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE
ACCOUNTS FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2023

HEYWOOD SHEPHERD
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2023

STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	2023	2022
	£	£
INCOME		
Subscriptions (This year only)	22,469	22,622
Interest on Deposits	1,340	1,198
Gift Aid Refunds	-	3,625
Book Sales	40	136
Fiche Sales	-	6
CD Sales	136	263
Advertising	14	-
Research Rooms - Mobberley	1,110	780
Royalties	791	806
Website Income	1,178	1,009
Donations	110	-
Funds from Closed Groups	3,229	-
Total Income for year	<u>30,417</u>	<u>30,445</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Magazine Printing	5,973	5,275
Magazine Postage	5,030	4,473
Capitation to Groups	6,000	7,000
Grants to Groups	572	-
Royalties to Groups	45	-
Insurance & FFHS Subscription	1,588	1,431
Subscriptions	240	64
Book Purchases for Resale	500	1,129
CD Purchases for Resale	675	73
Membership Expenses	1,262	542
Research Rooms - Mobberley	10,865	10,243
Crewe Research Centre	163	50
Website Expenses	2,508	1,229
Committee Costs	345	36
Accountancy Charges	3,690	3,636
Other Expenditure	320	817
Depreciation	60	75
Total Expenditure for the year	<u>39,836</u>	<u>36,073</u>
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	<u>(9,419)</u>	<u>(5,628)</u>

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2023

BALANCE SHEET

	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
Tangible Fixed Assets				
Equipment at Cost	13,690		13,690	
Additions during year	-		-	
	<u>13,690</u>		<u>13,690</u>	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	13,460		13,400	
		230		290
Furniture & Other Equipment at Cost	4,371		4,371	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	<u>4,371</u>		<u>4,371</u>	
Microfiche Library at Cost	1,422		1,422	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	<u>1,422</u>		<u>1,422</u>	
Mobberley Leasehold Improvements at Cost	5,759		5,759	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	<u>5,759</u>		<u>5,759</u>	
Library Books at Cost		45,388		45,388
		<u>45,618</u>		<u>45,678</u>
Current Assets				
Stock	1,150		2,300	
Sundry Debtors	2,047		2,029	
Prepayments	3,639		3,407	
Cash at Bank	111,880		120,499	
Cash in Hand				
	<u>118,716</u>		<u>128,235</u>	
Current Liabilities				
Subscriptions Received in Advance	6,481		6,641	
Accruals	<u>1,248</u>		<u>1,248</u>	
	<u>7,729</u>		<u>7,889</u>	
Net Current Assets		110,987		120,346
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>156,605</u>		<u>166,024</u>
Financed by:				
Society Funds				
Balance at 1st July 2022		166,024		171,652
(Deficit)/Surplus for year		(9,419)		(5,628)
		<u>156,605</u>		<u>166,024</u>

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE

CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2023

STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	2023	2022
	£	£
INCOME		
Subscriptions (This year only)	22,469	22,622
Interest on Deposits	1,372	1,201
Gift Aid Refunds	-	3,625
Book Sales	321	240
Fiche Sales	-	6
CD Sales	136	263
Advertising	14	-
Research Rooms - Mobberley	1,110	780
Royalties	791	806
Donations	1,021	27
Other Income	763	339
Door Money	2,567	1,098
Website Income	1,178	1,009
Total Income for year	<u>31,742</u>	<u>32,016</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Magazine Printing	5,973	5,275
Magazine Postage	5,030	4,473
Insurance & FFHS Subscription	1,588	1,431
Subscriptions	240	64
Book Purchases for Resale	500	1,129
CD Purchases for Resale	675	73
Membership Expenses	1,262	542
Research Rooms - Mobberley	10,865	10,243
Crewe Research Centre	163	50
Website Expenses	2,508	1,229
Committee Costs	-	36
Room Hire	3,034	1,150
Accountancy Charges	3,690	3,636
Library Expenses	37	20
Other Expenditure	2,557	1,745
Speakers	2,846	3,316
Refreshments	418	113
Donations and Gratuities	100	20
Depreciation	818	480
Total Expenditure for the year	<u>42,304</u>	<u>35,025</u>
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	<u>(10,562)</u>	<u>(3,009)</u>

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE

CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2023

BALANCE SHEET

	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
Tangible Fixed Assets				
Equipment at Cost	54,135		54,135	
Additions during year	1,313		-	
	<u>55,448</u>		<u>54,135</u>	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	26,691		26,148	
		28,757		27,987
Furniture & Other Equipment at Cost	27,381		27,381	
Additions during year	-		-	
	<u>27,381</u>		<u>27,381</u>	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	23,083		22,893	
		4,298		4,488
Microfiche Library at Cost	1,422		1,422	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	1,422		1,422	
		-		-
Library Books at Cost	76,020		76,020	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	11,376		11,291	
		64,644		64,729
Mobberley Leasehold Improvements at Cost	5,759		5,759	
Less: Aggregate Depreciation	5,759		5,759	
		-		-
		<u>97,699</u>		<u>97,204</u>
Current Assets				
Stock	1,150		2,300	
Sundry Debtor	2,047		2,029	
Prepayments	3,639		3,407	
Cash at Bank	158,732		169,364	
Cash in Hand	906		591	
	<u>166,474</u>		<u>177,691</u>	
Current Liabilities				
Subscriptions Received in Advance	6,481		6,641	
Accruals	1,248		1,248	
	<u>7,729</u>		<u>7,889</u>	
Net Current Assets		158,745		169,802
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>256,444</u>		<u>267,006</u>
Financed by:				
Group Funds				
Balance at 1st July 2022	267,006		270,015	
(Deficit)/Surplus for year	<u>(10,562)</u>		<u>(3,009)</u>	
		256,444		267,006
		<u>256,444</u>		<u>267,006</u>

THE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MANAGING COMMITTEE

I report on the accounts of The Family History Society of Cheshire for the year ended 30th June 2023

Respective responsibilities of the Managing Committee and Examiner

As the association's Managing Committee, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that an audit is not required under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- * examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- * follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- * state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

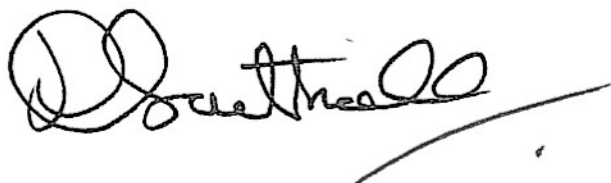
Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Association and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect, the requirements:
 - * to keep accounting records (in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act); and
 - * to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Acthave not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should have been drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



DAVID SOUTHALL
Chartered Accountant

1 Park Street
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 6SR

4th October 2023
