

President's Report for 3 May 2022 AGM

The past year has gradually seen the resumption of most NFHS groups, events, courses, excursions, and other activities. With the threat of new strains of Covid constantly on the horizon however, many members continue to be wary of unnecessary contact with others and meeting together in our rooms.

The NFHS has struggled over the past 2+ years and continues to struggle as our numbers dwindle and the use of our rooms declines. While preparing a presentation about the NFHS a week or two ago I had reason to look back over photographs and reports of our activities from the past. I wanted to present a very positive picture of our Society for the group I was speaking to. As I showed them a PowerPoint and spoke about the wonderful things we do, they were in awe of our commitment to family and local history. Now, following the easing of Covid restrictions, we need to encourage and develop that commitment, to ensure the growth of our society.

In the coming year we must reassess much of what we saw as 'normal' pre-March 2020 in order to move forward. We must find a way to make better use of our resources, including our wealth of knowledge and experience in the form of our wonderful members. Our Society exists so that we may research, promote and enjoy family history in the company of likeminded others, and to assist those who seek our help in the pursuit of their family history.

To this end, the NFHS established rooms in the Mechanics' Institute in 1991. Over the years, times have changed in the world of family history – we now have at our fingertips a wealth of information available online through a myriad of sites which allow us easy access to information almost instantly. Family history societies, however, remain an essential part of the process of researching our forebears. Nothing can replace the wealth of knowledge and experience which members bring to our society, and nothing can replace the resources which can only be found in institutions such as ours. Every one of our members has a unique set of skills and knowledge of value to others. We must work together to ensure that the NFHS continues to offer these valuable resources and guidance.

We are blessed with a small but enthusiastic and able group of members who keep the NFHS functioning at a very high standard, but we need input from many more members to ensure our Society can continue to operate and flourish well into the future.

We are currently running at a financial loss most months because our outlay exceeds our income. We pay in excess of \$500 per month in rent to Crown Lands for our rooms in the Mechanics' Institute and this is due to increase again in July. Our annual contents insurance has skyrocketed this year to almost \$4000 and our monthly bills for electricity, phone, internet, water, printing, and public liability insurance continue to rise along with incidentals such as cleaning supplies and hand gel. Our membership fees do not come close to covering this cost each month and visitors to the Society have been few and far between during the past two years where this was once a reliable source of income. Once our air conditioning is installed shortly our electricity bill will need to be monitored carefully to ensure we have the funds to cover the extra costs.

Thanks to the dedication of some members of the Publications Group we have had two excellent volumes launched towards the end of last year and a third is in the proof-reading stage to be released later in the year. As well as this, a 'How To' booklet on finding your military ancestors was recently produced for sale. Our courses and seminar days help to keep the Society solvent, although attendance at these has also diminished considerably.

We have many wonderful groups and activities available to members and friends. We are making a special effort to move with the times and offer much of what we do online as well as face-to-face, so that those who are unable to visit our rooms are not disadvantaged. Please check your Newsletter and our recently revamped website, join our closed Facebook Group, and think about how you can become more involved as a member of the NFHS. Invite your friends who share an interest in family history to join and attend some of our activities. We need your engagement so that our wonderful Society continues to grow and flourish.

As I step down from my four years as President in accordance with our Constitution, I would like to thank those who have worked tirelessly for the NFHS, individually or as a member of one of our groups (Library, Snippers, eTeam, Publications, Sandgate, 2022 Conference Sub-Committee), those who coordinate our many Special Interest Groups, present our seminars and courses, organise our events and excursions, ensure our technology functions well, and volunteer as Duty Librarians – all those who so generously donate their time and effort to our Society. Without you we could not exist.

A special 'thank you' must go to the outgoing Management Committee who have worked together to ensure the NFHS functions at its optimum. I have been particularly fortunate to work with such a dedicated group. To those who do not seek re-election, we wish the very best – we are grateful for your past input and support. Our incoming Committee, who will shortly be elected, will strive to continue the good work throughout the remainder of 2022 and into 2023.

Mel Woodford
President NFHS
May 2018 - May 2022