

## **Notes of the Search Room User Group meeting held on 13 June 2017 in meeting room 1, New Register House at 13:30 Hours**

### **Attendees**

Dee Williams (DW, NRS), Antony Slack (AS, NRS), Alison Lindsay (NRS), Emma Williamson (EW, NSS), Val Wilson, (ASGRA & Genealogist), Bruce Bishop, SAFHS, Janet Bishop, ASGRA,

**Apologies:** Iain Ferguson (NRS), Lloyd Pitcairn and Ken Nisbet (Genealogists).

### **1. Previous minutes of 29 March 2017**

1.1 The group accepted the content of the notes of the last meeting.

### **2. Centre software**

2.1 AS updated the group on progress with the ScotlandsPeople project. Following the website relaunch during September 2016, various modifications have been released to improve the customer experience and better match the search facilities available on the old website. Details of the future planned updates can be viewed from the 'What we are working on' box on the home page of the ScotlandsPeople website.

2.2 AS explained that work was now progressing to make the new website available from the search rooms, local family history centres and relevant Public Bodies. Customers accessing the service from these locations will be able to access modern day records as can be done currently. A specification had been written to cover the different functionality required and work is underway. No access to modern day images will be possible for customers searching out with these locations.

2.3 The new internet version that will be available in the search rooms will have the same image viewer as that currently available on the internet.

2.4 Customers will be able to use the same log in details that they might use when accessing the system outside of the search rooms. Customers without an account will need to register before using the new service. Customers without internet access will have an account created for them by Search Room staff. Customers will be able to select, book and pay for seats online in advance of their visit.

2.5 Customers sitting in the search rooms will only have access to ScotlandsPeople and the NRS website, as per the existing arrangement.

2.6 NRS are actively working to achieve monthly updates of indexes and images for the online version of ScotlandsPeople.

2.6 Robust testing will be required to ensure that the system is secure being that modern day records can be accessed. AS assured everyone that customers will have the opportunity to test the system before it goes into service. Initially the internet version will be rolled out at the ScotlandsPeople centre, before it is rolled

out to local family history centres and Public Bodies who currently access the ScotlandsPeople through a secure Unified Access Gateway (UAG) system.

### 3. Search room issues

3.1 DW confirmed that search room facilities will all be located in General Register House later in 2017. A meeting has been held with representatives of the season ticket holders on the 29 March 2017 to explain the proposals and seek their views. The main issues raised were:

- Local access to library books and a standalone computer.
- Noise created by customers or staff speaking.
- Privacy – some preferred the option of being together.
- Seat location – two requests for wall seats though this has since been reduced to one.
- Security – season ticket holders want to be able to leave their belongings on desks when taking a break.
- Space to lay out papers and files.
- Room temperatures – some felt that the Adam Dome would be too cool though a warmer and a cooler search room offering might be welcomed by some customers.

3.2 VW requested that virtual volumes and information available on discs be made available on one stand alone computer.

*Dn. DW has been advised that unified access isn't possible because virtual volumes are available on a network, which doesn't satisfy the conditions for making the information available on the discs.*

3.3 VW also queried why the process for retrieving some library books was so protracted? DW agreed to arrange for VW to detail her library book requirements with the NRS librarian to see whether additional books could be made available in the search room library.

**Action:** NRS librarian to arrange meeting with the season ticket holders to discuss their library book requirements

3.4 JB requested that adequate coat stands be provided.

3.5 VW queried whether the number of toilets in General Register House would be adequate for all the customers being that she understood that the toilets for the legal and historical search rooms were closing.

**Action:** DW to check whether there are plans to close public toilets in GRH

### 4. Records

4.1 Over 150,000 baptism entries from Scottish presbyterian churches had been released online when the website was relaunched. NRS planned to release a further 36,000 new presbyterian church records covering the period 1744 to 1855. Ultimately these records will be available in the search rooms when the internet version of ScotlandsPeople is launched.

*Dn. The 36,000 additional presbyterian records were released June 2017*

4.2 NRS still plan to release un-indexed kirk session records online by making them available through a subscription arrangement but the details of how this will

operate in practice have yet to be finalised. There are no plans to make indexed records available through a subscription.

4.3 NRS plan to release the 1935 valuation rolls later in 2017.

## **5. Any Other Business**

5.1 VW queried how NRS planned to re-introduce customers who had stopped using the online version of ScotlandsPeople following the relaunch during September 2016. AS explained that whilst initially NRS had received a large number of communications and in some cases complaints from customers after the relaunch, the website usage was now higher than pre-launch and the free index search was encouraging customers to view 20% more content. NRS were unaware of any customers actively refraining from using the website.

5.2 JB queried why the staff attending the ScotlandsPeople stand at the SAFHS conference had left at 14:30 and not put up any banners explaining who they were? DW said that she had been advised that they had left early because the event had been so quiet. She would check why the pop up banners had not be used.

*Dn. Since the meeting the staff who attended the SAFHS conference confirmed that they only put up one pop up banner rather than two due to space restrictions.*

5.3 BB suggested that if NRS wanted to publicise or make any announcements they could use the SAFHS bulletin as a method of communication, which is issued bi-annually and reaches over 50,000 people. DW thanked BB for this offer.

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

6.1 The date of the next meeting will take place on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017 at 13:30 in meeting room 1, New Register House.

Dee Williams  
Head of ScotlandsPeople Centre  
New Register House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3YT

14 July 2017