

Minutes of the Search Room User Group meeting held on Friday 20th February 2015 in meeting room 2, New Register House at 14:00 Hours

Attendees

Dee Williams (DW, NRS & chair), Iain Ferguson (IF, NRS), Gill Amos (GA, NRS), Alison Fordyce (AF, NSS), Val Wilson, (ASGRA & Genealogist), Bruce Bishop, SAFHS, Janet Bishop, ASGRA

Apologies:

Dr Irene O'Brien (Chair SCA & senior archivist), Alison Lindsay (NRS), Lloyd Pitcairn (Genealogist), Ken Nisbet (Genealogist).

1. Previous Minutes of 11 November 2014

1.1 The content of the notes of the last meeting/workshop were accepted.

2. Centre Software

2.1 NRS reminded the group that it is possible to select 5 registration districts at any one time by holding down the control key.

2.2 DW was hopeful that NRS might be willing to change their current policy with regards the five year search rule and the lack of a 'both' gender option for some statutory records. Further feedback will be given at the next meeting.

2.3 Ten registration districts were dropped during 2014. The districts will be confirmed at the next meeting.

2.4 The link to the NRS website still doesn't link customers to the ScotlandsPeople Centre web page, which would be more useful than the current link to the NRS home page. The genealogists reported that they can only get into the NRS website via Google.

Action: NRS to check access to NRS website from ScotlandsPeople network

2.5 The genealogists requested that the results for Leith on the ScotlandsPeople network be changed to match the internet and break Leith results down into Leith North and Leith South.

Action: NRS to establish whether their districts can match those available on the pay-per-view internet website

3. Centre & Historical Search Rooms

3.1 NRS will be rationalising the records available on the stand alone reference computers. They will be writing to season ticket holders, who are the main users of this facility, to check what records are still accessed.

3.2 The genealogists requested that the desk in the Reid search room be enlarged because the space around the computer is limited. NRS agreed to look at installing the computer in cradle under the desk, which will free up more space.

Action: NRS to look at installing the computer for access to virtual volumes in a cradle under the desk

3.3 Due to major IT changes that will be taking place, the group was advised that the historical and legal search rooms will be closed from midday Friday 27th February and will re-open on Tuesday 3rd March.

3.4 The group was asked whether they would support a closure of the search rooms for three days between Christmas and New Year as well all search rooms closing at 13:00 on Christmas and New Year's Eve. Their response was that they would be unhappy with such a closure because as professional genealogists they require access to the records to fulfil their work commitments.

3.5 The professional genealogists also pointed out that families tend to get more interested in genealogy matters over the festive period so they require access to be able to respond to enquiries.

3.6 The genealogists raised an issue with lack of personal hygiene with some customers. NRS agreed to purchase some room air fresheners. The impact of the air fresheners will be monitored.

4. Records

4.1 The 1865 valuation rolls will be released 19 March 2015 and the 1855 valuation rolls around September 2015. Thereafter, the military service appeal tribunal records will be released around November 2015 prior to Remembrance Sunday.

5. Estates Review

5.1 NRS had released details of the announcement of the Estates Review on their website at the link below. The genealogists were extremely disappointed with the decision, which would increase the travel time to the search rooms for those who need to travel to the centre of Edinburgh and then out to the Gyle on public transport. They also disliked the idea of moving from historic buildings, purpose built for civil registration and archival storage in Scotland, to purpose built, modern spaces.

<http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/about-us/corporate-information/estates-review>

5.2 The group was also concerned how the move might impact on the numbers of visitors to the search rooms because the numbers of tourists might reduce being that the buildings are out with the city centre.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 BB reported that the number of graveyards in Scotland was now over 3,500. SAFHS continues to update their website with all known graveyards and DW suggested an article in the ScotlandsPeople newsletter if there are changes that they wish to report.

6.2 AF retires in June. NHS require internet access for the replacement staff as well access to the network.

6.3 SAFHS will be holding their annual conference in Stirling. There is no internet access at the venue so ScotlandsPeople will not be attending.

6.4 The genealogists queried why staff from Birthlink are allowed to take out more adoption fiche than customers to the search rooms. The genealogists pointed out that they are professionals and are often requested to carry out work for companies representing adopted individuals.

Dn. Since the meeting DW established that due to the fact that the independent agency Birthlink operate the 'Birthlink register' (the adoptions contact register) for Scotland, their staff are allowed to access more than three fiche for adopted individuals.

The organisation is the official place that adopted persons go for the contact register for Scotland, mediation, counselling and support services.

7. Date of Next Meeting

7.1 The date of the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 12 May 2015 at 14:30 in meeting room 2, NRH.

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

2 March 2015