
THE SOMERSET AND DORSET FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

President: DAVID T HAWKINGS

Registered Charity No: 1010351



Minutes of the 50th AGM

Held at The Exchange, Sturminster Newton on 27 Sep 2025

1. Welcome

The President opened the meeting at 2 pm and welcomed the 53 members present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: John Burt, Michael Collard, Paul Radford, Jane Ferentzi-Sheppard, Sue Wilson, John Damon & Bob Steed.

3. Minutes of the 49th AGM

The Minutes of the 49th AGM, held in Yeovil, were accepted as a true record. **Proposer: Patricia Spencer, Seconder: Heather Brannon. Carried with one abstention.**

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising and no questions.

5. Acting Chairman's Report (Ted Udall)

Well, here it is! We've made it to 50! From small beginnings, the SDFHS has grown, and then contracted again, but it has remained successful, as shown by the attendance today. Many people have contributed in many ways to that success, and I won't attempt to name them all – if you're that interested, you can re-read the last two (excellent) copies of the Greenwood Tree!

I also don't intend to regale you with the history of the Society, as my primary role here today is to give the Trustees' Report for 2024 and say something about our current state. 2024 was a steady year for the Society. We continued to develop the ground floor of Broadway House, with new signage advertising the Society's presence, and visitor numbers have continued to increase.

Requests for research continue to come in and, although their volume remains low, many of them involve much in-depth research – probably an outfall from the Covid pandemic.

Most meetings of the Society's Trustees continue to be held using Zoom, but the Society's regional groups within the two counties largely reverted to face-to-face meetings.

The "out of counties" groups continue to operate both in the UK and overseas, and the Society is looking at ways in which further activities can be encouraged. OOC Rep. John Burt has been very active in this area.

The Society's quarterly journal "The Greenwood Tree" is regarded as one of the Society's major assets, and Editor Paul Radford is to be congratulated for his diligence and professionalism.

The Society did not carry out any major website changes during 2024, however, we were hoping that a new-look website would be up and running by today.

The online shop has continued to be very popular with members and non-members, and although income from book sales decreased during 2024, this year seems to be doing better (so far). The shop also provides options for the payment of subscriptions, booking events, making donations and paying Research Fees securely.

Social media activity continues with a Twitter account, a Facebook Page and a very active Facebook Group.

We have a healthy number of volunteers, who work on projects, welcome visitors, and keep various aspects of the Society operations working smoothly. But as always, we must try to think for the future, and more volunteers are always welcome. In particular, we desperately need more members to step forward to help run the Society, as you will see when we get to Item 8 on the Agenda.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the members of the Blackmore Vale group for the effort and imagination they have put into organising today's event.

Proposal by Anne Warr: that the Chairman's Report be accepted. Seconded by Robin Ansell. Carried unanimously.

6. Treasurer's Report (Ivan Gould)

I would like to pick out the highlights from page 4 & 8 of the accounts.

In 2024 our income was £47,712 (£44,590)

55% came from subscriptions, £26,348 (£21,035)

14.5% from Society services £6,925 (£6,625) &

7.8% from Donations £3,722 (£2,814).

Total expenditure was £54,884 (£57,310) giving a net decrease in funds of £7,172 (decrease £12,720).

Thus a £5,500 improvement versus 2023.

The Family History Centre at 48% & Greenwood Tree at 36% are the larger contributors to Society costs.

The reduction in funds was due to planned expenditure in operating from the ground-floor in our Yeovil Family History Centre. The Society income from subscriptions benefited from the three-year subscription effect.

Also 450 42.5% members paid their 2025 subscriptions in November & December 2024.

Visitors to the Research Centre continue to increase in 2024 & also 2025 YTD 7.5%

The cost of producing & posting our journal continues to rise and to receive a discount on UK postage we must distribute 1,000 + journals every quarter.

Overseas postage exceeds the £25 annual subscription.

However Paul Radford, our excellent editor, agreed to make some changes that have mitigated the potential printing cost increases proposed by our printers for this year.

Most other expenditure in 2024 was well controlled and in line with budget.

Currently the Society gets a good return on funds held in the Charity Commission account.

Sadly last year's income from Royalties, Gift Aid, Book Sales, & Research all declined, however significant donations were received to help with the welcoming of visitors.

From 2025 there will be NO impact due to the accounting change made in 2022.

The Society remains financially secure with £120,000 on deposit.

YTD the society's income is about £700 behind budget mainly due to the loss of about 200 members not renewing this year. Book sales and research income have improve in 2025.

2025 expenditure has again been very well controlled currently being £6,000 under budget.

Question: Has there been any analysis of why members did not renew?

Answer: No

Question: What is the current membership of the Society?

Answer: 1,264.

Proposal by John Brooking: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted, and with it the Accounts for 2024, Seconded by Chris Pope. Carried Unanimously.

7. Appointment of Independent Examiner

The Executive Committee recommended that the current Examiner, Mr Malvern Carvell of Yeovil, remain the Independent Examiner.

Proposer Ivan Gould. Seconder David Brown. Carried unanimously.

8. Election of Officers and Executive Committee

The Current Officers and members of the Executive Committee have all agreed to continue for a further year. There have been no other nominations.

Current Officers: Jennie McGowan (Vice-Chairman & Dorset group rep.)

Ivan Gould (Treasurer)

Ted Udall (Secretary & Yeovil group rep.)

Group Representatives: Laura Lyon (Blackmore Vale)

John Tanner (East Dorset)

Sue Wilson (West Dorset)

Steve Wilkinson (Mid Somerset)

Heather Brannon (Taunton)

Jane Sharp (West Somerset)

John Burt (Out of Counties)

Additional Members: Paul Radford (Editor of the Greenwood Tree)

John Brooking (Health & Safety rep.)

Chris Hall (Webmaster)

The above-named persons were returned unopposed.

9. Nominations for Vice Presidents & Life Members

Current Vice Presidents: Colin Dean, Bob Steed.

Proposal that Ann-Marie Wilkinson: former Society Chairman, and long-term leading member of the Computer-users' Committee be made a Vice President. **Proposed by Ted Udall, Seconded by Alan Brown. Carried unanimously.**

Life Members: John Boys, Dorothy Bower, Alan Brown, Jane Ferentzi-Sheppard, Rose Figgins, Delia Horsfall, Murial Monk, John Tanner, & Brian Webber.
There were no further nominations.

10. Closure of Business

The meeting closed at 2.29 pm. The 51st AGM of the SDFHS will be held in Taunton on Saturday 26th September 2026.