

CUMBRIA COUNTY HISTORY TRUST AGM 16th March 2013

Annual Report of the Trustees

1. Membership

At the end of 2012 there were 151 members of CCHT including 2 gold members, 80 individual founder/silver members, 55 ordinary/bronze members, and 14 societies members (1 gold, 9 silver, 4 bronze).

2. Finance

The accounts for 2012 show a surplus of receipts over payments of £3140. Of the total income of £30,770, just over £10,000 was received from members' and societies' subscriptions with a similar amount from the generous support of the CWAAS. The major item of expenditure (some 57% of the total) related to salary and supervision costs of the academic support based at Lancaster University.

3. Academic support

The Trust has entered into a contract with Lancaster University to secure the continued services of Professor Angus Winchester as part-time Director of the Victoria County History of Cumbria project, and Dr Sarah Rose as half time Volunteer Co-ordinator. This has involved adjustments to the employment status of Dr Rose, and both are employees of the University. Lancaster University, the centre of excellence for historical studies in North-West England, is (with the Trust and the Institute of Historical Research at London) one of governing partners in the project, and the Trustees have confidence in the revised arrangements for academic support.

4. The Victoria County History of Cumbria - progress to date

Since the 2011 AGM the VCH Cumbria Project has been going through a development phase at the heart of which has been the motivation and training of teams of volunteers, and gaining experience of volunteer working under academic guidance. Solid progress has been made, and much has been learned.

- The website is now fully functional with an interactive map enabling rapid access to information about individual parishes/townships including the, now almost completed, Jubilee Digests (work on the website has been generously supported by grants from Messrs Booths and the Marc Fitch Fund).
- The Volunteers Handbook which includes detailed guidance on research and writing VCH articles, and checklists of sources, written by Angus Winchester and Sarah Rose, has now been published. A fine piece of work, with Cumbria again taking the lead nationally.
- The preliminary work on population and institutions was completed satisfactorily and has been enlarged into the Jubilee Digest project (see Director's Report). A small group of volunteers willing to attempt the first full draft township articles under the direct supervision of Professor Angus Winchester have been working for a full year. Two articles (Mosser and Renwick) have been completed and posted on the website, and two others are nearing completion. A second, larger, team of volunteer researcher/drafters has now been formed to build on this experience.
- Training of volunteers: under the direction of trustee Marion McClintock, working with Volunteer Co-ordinator Dr Sarah Rose and Dr Michael Winstanley, and with grant assistance from the RDPE LEADER project, a programme of training courses has been successfully developed. Attention has also been given to ways of bringing volunteers together to work in teams: this has proved more difficult than expected but progress is being made for example in Addingham and Lorton.

5. Support for the Project

There continues to be a strong response from local historians wishing to participate as volunteers, and significant growth in our membership. Our patron Dr David Starkey came to Rheged in November 2012 to deliver a lecture on "Kendal's Real Queen" (Lady Margaret Beaufort) to an audience of 180, and a return of over £1200 to the Trust.

6. Overall position

The revival of work on VCH Cumbria has, with the generous support of our membership (and in particular the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society), now been achieved, and the Trust is in funds to continue on the present basis for two more years. The Trustees are confident that the evidence of real progress, based on combining the skills of a small but very experienced academic team with the enthusiasm and determination of a large volunteer body, will ensure that continued support is forthcoming to enable work to continue for many years.

Nevertheless it will be necessary to ensure that the present funding base is renewed or replicated after the first five years, and - if at all possible - significantly enlarged to increase the amount of academic time available to support increased volunteer output.

During the next 12 months the Trustees will be exploring all available avenues for raising the finance to continue the work after 2014.

Bryan Gray

Chair

February 2014