

**Welcome & Update: Camilla von Massenbach, Chair of Free UK Genealogy  
Trustees and Pat Reynolds, Executive Director Free UK Genealogy**

Camilla von Massenbach:

On behalf of all the trustees for Free UK genealogy, we welcome you today, fellow volunteers, key personnel and other guests interested in family history, heritage and publicly available records.

I am Camilla von Massenbach, the chairman and I would like to make some introductions - put some faces to some names. So I guess you should better stand up.

Ben Laurie (hello), Graham Hart (hello) and David Mayall. We are the long term trustees, here from the beginning, or nearly the beginning, quite a few years ago now. Jim Killock, joined as trustee a while ago, he's been not able to come today and then most recently Richard Little (hi) and Billy Davis have both most recently joined the board.

Allan Raymond, who many of you will know, sat on the board as a Trustee for a while, but decided his time was better spent hands on with FreeBMD so he's currently not with us.

Last year Pat Reynolds joined Free UK Genealogy as Executive Director. She is proving a huge asset and is carrying forward our strategy she has helped us form. So over to Pat.

Pat Reynolds:

First, some housekeeping: there are no alarm drills planned today, so if an alarm does go off, please could you leave by the entrance that you came in by, which hopefully won't lead you through a conflagration, but if it appears to, there are other marked exit routes.

We are meeting today in a building that has a great of history to do with family trees that go back way before human and you can probably see over on the left my left there, there is a plaque which records the debates held here by Charles Darwin, very much the long term family history.

Please don't take a photographs of that or anything else, we have been asked by our hosts to keep the photography to the minimum of the two recordings live recordings, made by the mobile phones.

Next, I would like to introduce somebody who I think everyone in this room knows but nobody's met before, Helena Hyde, who is our Engagement Co-ordinator and who joined us in September, no end of August, who has done a good job getting this conference organised amongst many other things. I would also like to introduce somebody that who do not know exists, who is Stacey Peacock-Bjurstrom, who scans films, fiches and books and Eric Dickens of FreeREG, and Brenda Bowers of FreeCEN was not able to come today, but is joining us online and Margaret Singleton, is from FreeCEN, is going to join us for questions point towards the end of the day.

Camilla von Massenbach:

Each area which we are addressing at the moment as Trustees is that of the governance of the charity. We are broadening the board of trustees. A larger board gives us advantages in things like rotation of roles, and also brings a broader skills set into the organization, it doesn't harm to bring in the enthusiasm and ideas of new people as well.

To support the board, over the next year, we will be creating an advisory panel. This pool of people - volunteers with a range of skills and interests will brain storm ideas and as individuals be called on from time to time to give the benefit of their specialist knowledge and advice to inform the board of trustees.

The organisation is moving forward on an Open Data basis. There will be more about that later. We are also altering the structure of the organisation. We wish to take advantage of being a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) for short. Which is a new form of legal entity designed for non-profit organisations in the UK.

We will also create a trading arm of the charity. More income comes through the banner advertising than through donations and as such are liable to pay tax. With the new set up the tax situation is improved.

As part of this whole reorganisation we need to formalise the relationship between Free UK genealogy and our volunteers. All this is a change of form, not of purpose. As an organisation we will be less dependent on existing key people, will be more transparent, better able to raise funds to develop the projects, tools and better able to maximise the value given by all the transcriber and other volunteer effort, whilst safeguarding the free access model we all believe in.

Pat has more to say on the finances....

Pat Reynolds:

You will no doubt be bitterly disappointed to find out there will not be a PowerPoint of the accounts. I did think about it.

The 19...sorry the 2014-15 annual report and accounts are now available from the Charity Commission website. If you have any questions on these, please do ask me, because they go in in a certain format, sometimes it is not easy to see what the accountants have meant by things.

I am very pleased to say that we can now claim GiftAid on donations through Free UK Genealogy - we received over £5,000 in donations last year, that's 14-15. So if all of those people were tax payers in the UK and are willing to GiftAid we would have seen another £1,000 a year, at no extra cost to those donors.

The annual report only covers to the end of March last year, before I joined, so I thought I would like to quickly take you through what is happening with our projects.

In FreeBMD - in talks with government about access to more recent records. GRO is now empowered to provide digital certificates, and we are looking at working with them on the ordering, to basically put in place something on the ordering side, which you can from both the structure of FreeBMD and UKBMD.

Longer term we are looking at increasing the, no ...not increasing, changing the way that users, researchers access the site and making it a little more up to date than it is at the moment. FreeCEN, similarly is being updated but not just for the way that users can use it but also for transcribers and the co-ordinators and all those involved in the managing

FreeCEN2 some of you might be aware is just now in a very basic form with data from four counties, four registration districts, being trialed, to make sure it is basically functional.

From that...like better tools so it is easier to read.

FreeREG we are actually we are half way through major redevelopment and recent survey showed already researchers, coordinators and transcribers are all using the new system. New developments..so they can sign up so they can get an alert when something they are interested in, has been transcribed rather than having to check back on the website regularly, and lots of other good stuff.

We are now wanting Parishes and Non-Conformist Churches to get in touch, to transcribe their own records or add them to our own to do heap. And the next development phases of FreeREG will be making the link between the record and the Parish and the body that created it much stronger.

For all our products we are starting to look again at developing an online transcription tool, but with no plans to stop off-line transcriptions and I will be inviting people to join a focus group for discussion later in the year.

We have fabulous work, fabulous data, and the people who know about it, think it is fantastic, but you can walk into a family history society for example and say I work for the charity that looks after FreeBMD, or FreeREG or FreeCEN and you get odd looks from some people and you think you are doing family history and you don't know about us, - how can that be? Then the other people in room say 'you must do! It's so much better than Ancestry..this freeBMD stuff' Apparently you can tell us, that we have made a mistake and we will put it right

[Laughter]

For all our projects, we will be launching a publicity and recruitment campaign later this year and part of the campaign is to find people who would really enjoy being a transcriber, or another sort of volunteer with us and encouraging them to join us.

The over-arching website - [freeukgenealogy.org.uk](http://freeukgenealogy.org.uk) - is the place to look for volunteering opportunities. It is the first time that virtually everything is there, it's not just transcription.

It's also where our policies are stored, and information about the charity and we are beginning to use the blog to highlight developments.

The main development we are here to discuss today is Open Data, and we will now move into that part of the programme. If you have questions on what Camilla or I have talked about so far - or anything else please do ask in the final session, or contact us afterwards.