

## Progress Soars!

Lots of changes, progress, new volunteers, lots of hits on the web site and other major changes - this newsletter is long overdue!!

### A quick update on where we stand:

**Marriages:** We are pressing ahead with marriages. The web shows 87,481 and I have more here ready for publication that would push the web total to over 103,000. That makes marriages some two thirds done which is a tremendous achievement! We have all marriages to 1887 completed and published so users can search the 50 year period 1837 to 1887 with confidence. If you don't find the record you want in that period, then it's not held by Bath! The next update will complete all records to 1900 and will give a lot extra also in following years. Marriages will almost certainly be complete, right up to present day, this time next year. Note that this will NOT include registers still in use at Churches/Chapels. The Register Office now has a single printed and bound volume indexing all marriages from 1837 to 1860 and the next volume for 1861 to 1880 is at the binders. We will print off 1881 to 1900 in the next few weeks. Within a year from now, eight printed and bound index books will replace over 1,000 handwritten index books, and all the data will be available to the public worldwide, via the BathBMD web site.

**Births:** Births have about 7% of entries done and published. These complete the years 1837 to 1840, and all the published records are all before 1862. Volunteers have been busy on Stage One transcribing of Birth indexes, and 75,000 names are held ready for the second stage of transcribing. We will try and get more Births published later this year, but at the moment, marriages are being given priority.

**Deaths:** Work has not started on transcribing deaths yet.

### Major Changes.

It has been a turbulent time at BathBMD headquarters since the last newsletter! First some background. I started this new venture in January 2004. I had already spent some seven years on my own family tree, and my other hobby of home computing was even longer well established. I now wanted to put something back into Genealogy. My wife, Andrea, was working in Bath Register Office as the Office Manager, so it was an ideal opening for me to ease some of their frustrations with finding records at the same time. BathBMD was born as a perfect hobby activity for me, and would be a benefit to genealogy and everyone concerned with it.

I am not going to go into the finer detail, but the bottom line is that Andrea has now handed her notice in at the Register Office, and will leave at the end of April. However, BathBMD is secure and will continue. I will be the main driver, and will continue to photocopy index books that our volunteers transcribe for us. Judy Stone, the Superintendent Registrar in Bath is long since convinced of the merits of the project and will continue to support and facilitate it. The project is now well

established, we have a host of volunteers, we have a sound working transcribing system, and we are all determined that BathBMD will progress at its ever accelerating rate! Access to the data we are transcribing is not dependent on my wife working there, although Andrea will continue an interest by doing weekend marriages by arrangement, and may also continue as a transcribing volunteer!

### **Volunteer Pool Grows.**

We are doing well with our volunteer pool. In fact, if the truth be known, they have been working so well, they have been running us ragged!! I try to keep all volunteers with work in hand, so unless they say that they want to stop volunteering, they will be sent new batches as they run out. This has been an increasing activity, and just when we thought that a stock of photocopying had been built up, one volunteer up north got us about five new volunteers by placing a message with his local family history group. That was fantastic. I appreciate that with the sheer enormity of the task, we cannot expect some not to tire occasionally. New volunteers will be essential. All work at their own pace. There are no goals, and no league tables. All help is good help, and even the smallest contribution is something that is done forever, and helps move the project forward. I keep saying it, and I will say it again now - THANK YOU volunteers one and all. You have all been fantastic, and your help is valued enormously. This project would never have got going without you. Please keep up the excellent work.

I did at one point launch on an idea that proved to be a non starter. Remember the 1901 census? It was partly transcribed by prison inmates (albeit under contract!). I wrote to a few local prisons to see if bored prisoners may like something constructive to do. (Like typing up our indexes!!). I thought they could work like any other volunteer, not having to leave their home!!! It turned out that it was not possible. Prisoners are not allowed access to e-mail. Oh well, never mind. I might have been up all night photocopying indexes for them. Phew!

### **It's only a photocopier!**

You would think that getting a million records transcribed, checked, processed and published on a web database that the public world-wide can search would be the difficult bit. Not so!! Working the Register Office photocopier was something that had me, and the complete Register Office staff baffled for a long time. But I think we have finally got it cracked!! All I wanted to do was copy index books, slightly reduced in size, and onto A4 paper. The vast majority of the index books are just as readable in a slightly smaller size, so a saving in paper, postage and copier toner cartridges was something to achieve if we could. Most volunteers will now have had copies in A4 size. If an index book is written in unusually small handwriting, I may still copy to A3 paper. If volunteers find any copy too hard to read, please ask for a larger size re-copy.

### **Web Site Hits.**

In the last Newsletter, I was impressed that we had over 11,000 hits to the BathBMD web site. We now have over 25,000! I keep a record of the hit count as we make each update, and it has grown from 38 hits a day, to 56, then 65, then 83, then 92, and we now get over 100 hits a day. With more data we can expect this figure to further increase. I will ignore the fact that Cheshire gets over 1,700 hits a day! Well, they already have four times as much data as we will ever have!!

### **Web Software Enhanced.**

While talking about the web site, Ian Hartas of CheshireBMD fame, has made some software improvements. Users may know that we index all names and variants to a marriage event. So widows and divorcees (each having had two surnames already) are indexed to both names for their current marriage. This was not apparent before Ian's improvements. Now, those marriages that have more than

two names associated with them, will be an active hyperlink. Clicking on this hyperlink will show all names that are indexed to that marriage. Good stuff Ian, and many thanks. You're doing a great job.

**In closing.....**

Well that brings us broadly up to date with what's been happening at our end. BathBMD is now more established, and on firmer ground, and making sound progress. I'm sure you all join me in wishing my wife well in her new job. She is looking forward to it tremendously. She has been a great asset to the BMD project, and at first I did have my worries about if and how it would continue. But we have come through the crisis. A special thanks also to Judy Stone, who must be one of the more progressive, enlightened and fore-sighted Superintendent Registrars. We are lucky she is Bath's SR!

**Feedback...**

We welcome feedback from any volunteers, past, present or future! Tell us what you think is good, or bad. Tell us what you want to do, or what you want us to do. Send all comments to [Submit@BathBMD.org.uk](mailto:Submit@BathBMD.org.uk).

**John and Andrea Fairlie.**