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LOOKING AHEAD

The Heritage Society this year is focusing attention on the Isles, North and South, which have not received adequate attention from us in recent years. We hope to co-opt honorary correspondents on each island to keep the committee informed on all aspects of our heritage, starting with Westray, Papa Westray and Stronsay.

For the Summer Outing, in line with this policy, a visit to Westray is proposed to see the excavations there, or, alternatively, to Eday to include a crossing to the Calf of Eday where there is an excavation of exceptional interest. Such trips are made possible by the regular Ferry Service of the Golden Marianna. The date will be 4th or 11th June (notice will be in The Orcadian).

In September there will be an Outing to Lyness to look at the site of the proposed Industrial Museum, a project which is being enthusiastically promoted by the Hoy Co-operative Society. The museum will centre round Scapa Flow and its long, dramatic maritime history. Intact is the pumping equipment for re-fuelling the ships using the Flow in the Second World War and the spacious building in which the pumps are housed makes the ideal premises for this project. The Co-operative members will arrange transport and catering in the café which opens this summer. From Lyness to Melsetter House where Miss Elsie Seatter will welcome our party and thence to have a look at the Martello Tower. Maybe the Houton-Lyness Ferry will be operating by that time.

By the time this Newsletter reaches members the Rev. Harald Mooney, President of the Heritage Society, will have given a talk, 'Recollections of Birsay' based on the inspiring sermon he preached in St. Magnus Kirk at the time of the Conference last July. This event taking place in The Strynd reminds us that Laura Grimond rescued these historic houses from decay and by way of the Heritage Society they became the property of the Orkney Islands' Council, serving a useful purpose in the community.

A talk on Planning with slides will be given by Mr. Maurice Sargent, Chief Planning Officer of the O.I.C. in the Community Centre, Kirkwall, on <sup>postponed</sup> ~~Wednesday, 9th March~~, and later on, probably early in April, we hope to present a programme compiled from the archives - sound and visual- in the Arts Theatre. This will be a fund-raising event in support of the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, which is threatened by drastic educational cuts. Orkney archivists rely on this department of the/

of the University for information and advice.

Further excavations at Simison's Chambered Tomb (which the Heritage Society visited last year) revealing a circumventing burial area of a later date, makes it more than ever necessary to have this important site, along with the Liddle Burnt Mound, taken into guardianship. Dr. Lamb would like to see the O.I.C. take over this responsibility.

Finally, members are reminded that their subscriptions for 1982/83 are due and should be paid to the Hon. Treasurer, W. Melville, Royal Bank of Scotland, Kirkwall. \* Only £1 still. £10 life-membership. We hope to issue a membership card this year and with its aid to recruit new members. Meanwhile please encourage your conservation-minded friends to join.

M. Linklater. (Hon Secretary)

\* or Miss Mary Bain, the Dairy, Kirkwall

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY UPDATED.

The total re-survey of all archaeological sites, with the addition of many newly-discovered ones, has been carried out for Westray, Papay, Sanday, North Ronaldsay, Eday, Stronsay, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre, and for approximately one-third of Mainland. As well as being stored in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), where it is used for day-to-day consultation and as the basis for all other work, the information is disseminated in the form of pamphlet inventories published by the Royal Commission on the Ancient Monuments of Scotland. (The one covering Rousay and adjacent islands will appear this winter). The pamphlets make the new information available to wide scholarship as well as within the locality.

Excavation Strategy. In Scotland in the 1970s the selection of sites for excavation at public expense was still largely a haphazard business; often the sites which happened to come to the attention of the Inspectorate were neither the best nor the most seriously threatened examples within their types. One of the most important aspects of the SMR is to enable a reasoned selection to be made; sites can be chosen for excavation in the confident awareness that they are the best sites, and they can be excavated with an awareness of the research questions relevant to that body of sites as a whole. It is most encouraging that in 1982 the Scottish Development Department has selected three sites at which to support excavations - a twelfth-century settlement, identifiable with events related in Orkneyinga Saga, at Tuquoy in Westray, where excavation began last summer; a settlement of the very earliest Viking period, probably one of the six royal husebyar or administrative farms from which according to Norwegian theory, Orkney was governed in the first century or two of the Norse earldom, at Pool in Sanday; and a chambered tomb at Tresness on the same island. In each case the scale of work - a moderate-sized dig at Tuquoy, the build-up to a big project at Pool, and a small-scale rescue effort at Tresness - is exactly what I had recommended as appropriate. This means that public excavation funds are being used much more effectively than in the past; the completion of the SMR is justified by this consideration alone.

Academic Research./

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Academic Research. The re-survey throws up research problems, some of which have been taken up by university-based researchers who use the SMR information as their starting point. An M Phil at Durham is nearing completion on some of the mediaeval chapel sites, and at the same university an MA student is studying in detail the prehistoric field boundaries in Eday. Most interesting is the problem of the Sanday farm mounds, being studied intensively at Strathclyde University in consultation with scholars in the University of Tromsø who are working on related sites in their locality. I have just received a letter from a new student who is about to join the Strathclyde project. Ofcourse, academic research is inseparable from rescue excavation - as is clearly seen both at Tuquoy and Pool.

Tourism. An important development which is getting under way now that the North Isles surveys are complete, is the more business-like development of Orkney's archaeological resource to economic advantage of the communities. A suitable line of future development was revealed by our Birsay conference which attracted nearly a hundred delegates from outwith Orkney as well as nearly as many local people. The experience was repeated later in the year by the Prehistoric Society conference attended by forty-five delegates, and I acted as organiser and guide for a party of twenty-one doctoral candidates from Stockholm University whom I took to Housay and Westray as well as around the Mainland. It is clear that tourist development of which the outer isles have a special economic need, can best be achieved by the promotion of specialist guided tours on a regular basis. Archaeological sites in the outer isles are interesting and often spectacular, but as they are not well-known and are not in official guardianship, they cannot be presented to the lay public except under specialist guidance.

I am at present engaged in consultations with Orkney Islands' Council and am hopeful that some such tours, promoted by local enterprise with the blessing of OIC and with myself as archaeological adviser, can be got under way in 1983. An experimental tour, with thirty-five places, has been organised for early July on the theme, 'A Pilgrimage to the Saga-Steads of Orkney'; this is being marketed in Norway, through the Friendship Association, and if successful will provide a model for a range of tours in future years. Meanwhile we are continuing to produce detailed guide-leaflets, containing information which has never before been given to the general public, to all the outer isles. I believe that it is extremely important for the long-term future of archaeology, that it should legitimately be used to make a material contribution to the life of the islands.

R.G. Lamb.

Resident Field Archaeologist

WILLIAM IRVINE on FISHING in PAPA WESTRAY

Today we hear so much about the fishing industry, quotas from here and rules and regulations for there. But to the fishermen of Orkney and Shetland they have every reason to feel that their waters and heritage are being especially exploited by the fishing fleets of Europe. This phenomenon is not something new to our small world, our small world being the island of Papa Westray. The area of the island is some 2,400 acres, which did not provide much of a livelihood for a population of over 300 in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The crofts were only about ten or twelve acres so the sea was exploited for the main part of everyone's survival, survival being the operative word at that time. Families were usually large so it was common for the father and several of his sons to crew the fishing boats. Papay at that time had a fleet of some eighteen skifts. They would have been twenty to thirty feet of keel. They would have been crewed by three, four or five men. Many times they would have had to row as far as North Ronaldsay and back. The waters to the west, north and east of Papay are very treacherous, tides are extremely strong but these men were expert seafarers and could utilise the tides to their greatest advantage on their various passages to the fishing grounds. Some of their favourite fishing places were to the east Lunnabake, to the north the Three Mill Bank and beyond, to the west the Peedie Bank and the Coter Bank. In between names like Botlands, Mill, O'Brien, Aesvaid, and the edge of the Shald, as well as many others. These were found by the compass and various marks on the shore, not for them the modern aids of navigation. Likewise their return was by compass and what these people termed the mither-dy or home-trace.

But firstly those big skifts were only used for the summer fishing, usually they were launched shortly after Beltane and were hauled into their nousts immediately after lammas time. They were mostly all launched one day and likewise drawn up. No doubt if one were to look up the school registers of that period one could find the exact dates due to lack of boys at school. For many this was their baptism to a sea-going career. The flag of Cott was indeed a busy place at that time for most of the North End boats, or North Yard as it was at that time, would have put off from there. All the boats had a name but mostly they were referred to as the 'Bot of Hinso' or the 'Bot of Cott'. Four of these boats I would like to recall. Firstly the Tryton or 'Bot of Hinso', this was my grandfather's boat. She was one of the most strongly built, being of east coast of Scotland origin. My grandfather along with his brother and so many of his seven sons as were required would crew the boat. They would hope to catch mainly cod, but also ling, haddock and saithe. Cod was the premium fish, it would mostly be salted and sold but should there be large quantities of fish they would be sold fresh. They would be sold to local merchant John Sinclair or perhaps they would go to Westray and sell to John Hewison. Salt would be procured from there. Always a plentiful supply of fish would be salted for their own use for fish was their staple diet. These would be carried home on their backs in cubbies made of 'boolowans' or the weed dochans. Nothing was wasted in those days not even the weeds. The fishing boats would carry a variety of fishing lines, sometimes great lines would be/

be used but mostly the hand lines. This involved a length of line with a spraal on the bottom end. It was a sort of semi circle wire about two foot six inches long with a lead weight in the middle then a lure on each end. Bait would be logworm, lempits or razor fish. But also small leads fashioned to resemble sand-eels. This was called 'sma leads'. Then there was also the wicked looking murderers or rippers, this was a weight of about six pounds with possibly six hooks either welded on the side or tied in pairs through the lead. This was mostly for large fish in deep waters. There would be a small bogie stove aboard the boat to cook a simple meal or make a pot of tea. Grandmother would ensure a plentiful supply of oatcakes. Water was only taken from one well as it was proved to keep longer in their water barrel at sea. This was from the well at Midhouse. So for many years the Tryton sailed the summer seas around Papay and was a most successful fishing boat.

My maternal grandfather had the boat known as the Ducho or the 'bot of Vestness'. He along with two friends cre-wed this boat. I remember him once saying that one year the fishing had been so successful that it only took a short time to fill the boat. All the top of the sea was a mass of saithe as far as the eye could see. All they needed to do was using a clip and hook them aboard. In fact it looked as if one could almost walk on the water they were so close together. All were heading in one direction. Another episode he recalled occasionally was one beautiful summer night, they had had a fairly successful days fishing at Runnabrake. They decided to lie heave-to all night and get a second tide. My grandfather was at the helm as the boat gently moved through the water to the east of North Ronaldsay. Suddenly from the calm sea a huge monster rose from the deep, its head resembled that of a horse with a long neck with a mane like appearance. It rose approximately eight feet and looked right down in the cockpit of the boat. My grandfather shouted to his two crew members sleeping in the forecabin but by the time they got up the monster disappeared with only a slight ripple. No-one would ever have doubted my grandfather's word, he was a trusted reliable man. A remarkable experience shared I believe with one or two people around the same time.

The third boat is the 'Ailen', this was the Doctor's boat which was communally owned by the people of Papay. She was used to bring succour to the sick at a time when no resident doctor was on the island. She was built by Peter Miller of Bucklesbury,

Aikerness, Westray as were many of the other boats. She measured 17 feet of keel and 22 feet overall. Her design was taken from an older boat of Fair Isle design. She pulled four oars a side and under sail carried a lugsail and mizzen. Dr. Murphy was the G.P. in Westray when she was built, he offered to present a bottle of champagne to be broken on her bows if she was called 'Ailen' after his own little daughter.

Needless to say it must have been one of the rare occasions when a boat was launched in our area in the time honoured way. She was a very fast sailor and did many hundreds and possibly thousands of crossings to and from Westray. One of her fastest trips from Westray/

Westray was fifteen minutes and that included the time it took to haul the boat into her boat house. This record would have stood until such time as Loganair arrived on the scene. It can also be recalled that this was the boat that carried out the heroic rescue from the Aberdeen trawler Badger on May 26th 1906. No doubt God did watch over this boat and all who sailed in her.

Finally the unnamed boat. As well as the big skiffs most had a smaller boat for winter fishing. This would have been a boat of about fifteen feet of keel, pulled up and down each time they went fishing. The year was now 1904, the weather being especially fine tempting the men to go and replenish their fish tub. Old Christmas day dawned especially fine but a slight red in the sunrise. Men were really busy on the flag of Cott getting their boats ready for sea. They would have gone three or four miles east of Papay and fishing had been fairly good. As the day wore on the wind rose from the south east, all the boats had to reef their sails and go home. In the midst of this fleet it was found that one boat had disappeared although no one saw what happened. Immediately a full scale search was carried out, no trace of anything was ever found. It just seemed as if some giant hand had plucked the boat and crew away. Papay and especially the Groat family had paid a high price for fishing that day. As the boats returned to the darkened shore, a surviving son had to break the tragic news to his mother that a father and two sons had perished coming home from the fishing.

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#### SINCE THE LAST LETTER.....

The highlight of 1982 was ofcourse the Birsay Conference, but before this members visited the Ayre Mill, Kirkwall, a new exhibition at Stromness Museum and the Tomb of the Eagles at Isbister, South Ronaldsay. The committee considered and discussed many items, prominent among them being the proposed Cathedral extension.

Quite a number turned out to look over the Ayre Mill in March at the invitation of Mr. Robert Swanney. There was much speculation regarding its future, admiration expressed for Mr. Swanney's declared wish to preserve the character of the building and his efforts to keep it from deteriorating meanwhile. It was felt that the Society could not play a major role in this, but members with practical conservation experience would be pleased to advise.

The Museum visit, on a wet and windy Saturday evening, was an early viewing of the exhibition 'Days of Sail and Canvas - a Century of Sail in Orkney'. We are indebted to Bryce Wilson, Museums' Officer, and Peter Leith of both Museum and O.H.S. committees, our guides for the evening, who can always be relied upon to stimulate our interest by their knowledge, frequently spiced with pawky humour!

In contrast, weatherwise, our safari to the Tomb of the Eagles was accompanied by sunshine and blue skies, and a large turnout of members and visitors availed themselves/

themselves of the opportunity, kindly provided by Mr. and Mrs. Simison, proprietors of Isbister, to view this intriguing chambered tomb.

The committee had a useful meeting at the end of March with Magnus Magnusson, Chairman of the Ancient Monuments' Board, and Mr. Tom Lister and Mr. Iain McIvor of the Scottish Development Department, to discuss Orcadian 'monumental' matters. This was interesting and helpful, one outcome being the reopening of Maeshowe on Saturdays and Sundays, lack of which had been a drawback for both tourists and locals. The closer contact between those bodies and ourselves was valued, though of course we are fortunate in having Mrs. Laura Grimond on the A.A. Board. A submission on further needs and ideas has since been compiled and submitted by archaeologists Beverley Smith and David Haigh who has recently left Orkney.

In May the committee spent a considerable amount of time in consideration of, discussion and action on the proposed Cathedral plans. Since members had the chance to follow this controversy in the 'Orcadian' which reported it fully, suffice to say that we maintain our vigilance on this unique property of the people of Kirkwall. It is well to remember too that a useful offer was made by the Norwegian Minister of Education and Religion when he visited the St. Magnus Festival in June, that facilities for training local masons in restorative work could be made available in Norway. This was of particular interest since one of our recommendations to the C.I.C. was that local masons be trained and employed in the maintenance of the Cathedral.

Committee members have also continued their usual constructive interest in and scrutiny of all plans submitted from the conservation areas and our main concern now is that enough financial aid be made available from the Council's Heritage Fund to enable suitable restoration, for which there is a growing desire among the public and contractors.

And so to the Birsay conference, for the success of which congratulations are due to all concerned in its inception and organisation. Not a few difficulties were triumphantly overcome by Dr. Lamb, Dr. Omand, Mrs. Grimond, Mrs. Linklater and Miss Bain, to name but some of those involved, and their scholarly team from the South. Again even the weather rose to the occasion, greatly increasing the enjoyment of the various site examinations. The conference was brought to a close after a glorious and interest-packed Sunday by a service in St. Magnus Church, Birsay, conducted by the Reverend Harald Mooney, whose sermon was the most fitting and inspiring heard by some for a long time. There is such a wealth of material to report from this important event that members will be pleased to learn that Vol.2 of our magazine, Orkney Heritage, will be given over entirely to its proceedings and should appear around March or April. This will be dedicated to Lord Birsay, or Harald Leslie, as most Orcadians knew him, who attended the conference although he was unable because of other duties to introduce it as we had hoped. His death in November was regretted not only in Orkney but much further afield. Our sympathy goes to Lady Birsay whose father was the late Provost Warwick of Stromness.

Vol.I of Orkney Heritage was another success story and we owe credit to the Editor, Mr. William Thomson, and all the contributors. Over 400 copies were sold leaving 100 yet available (tourist sales will take care of that) and there are now around 100 standing orders.

A relatively small proportion of our membership attended the A.G.M. in early November. Regretfully we accepted the retirement of secretary Jean MacInnes to whom the Society is grateful for three years' quietly efficient work. Happily, Marjorie Linklater willingly succeeded her. Perhaps one of these days someone will show some enthusiasm for relieving in the chair! The present incumbent has more than completed the statutory three years... However there is refreshing new blood on the committee which lost Mr. Peter Twatt for health reasons - our thanks to him for his service and our good wishes. We welcome B. Smith, D. Lea and A. Welsh whose suggestion for having island correspondents was eagerly approved. Discussion on this led to seek the Papa Westray maritime article above from Mr. Irvine. It is certain that there must be many of our members or their friends who might similarly be able to reminisce from their past on some topic or other. We would welcome this, so please get out your pens and start scribbling!

In connection also with research into the past, we have promised Mr. E. Holt, County Music Adviser, to appeal for any information on local music or composers as yet unrecorded which can be passed on for a Y.O.P. project. Any dusty manuscripts in your attic?

In November too we learned that the Flotta Oil Terminal had won a Civic Trust award and we are grateful that Occidental North Sea Consortium have managed to establish the terminal with such a low profile. To quote from the C.T., 'Altogether, the scheme is one which could be, and could have been, emulated with advantage in other oil-related developments which have not achieved the high standards evident at Flotta'. Earlier in the year we were especially pleased that an Illustrated London News Award had been presented to Occidental for their sponsorship of the Resident Field Archaeologist in Orkney, indication of the valuable work being achieved by Raymond Lamb.

Finally, included below is a hopefully definitive article provided by Mr. Ray Fereday, Head of History, Kirkwall Grammar School, on the Maid of Norway, which we trust will be of interest in solving the identification problem concerning the Margarets. This is the result of a slip in the conference publicity material in the last Newsletter for which the guilty parties now hope they have done sufficient penance! Also, a typing error occurred in the Birsay Boundary article by Mrs. Johina Leith - the name Mid Looin should have read Mid Tooin, 'tooin' being the designation for a hill-top. The Tooin o' Rusht was the one most heard of by Mrs. Leith when she was younger. Do others remember this?

E. Bevan. (Chairman)



## THE RAID OF NORWAY

When Alexander III died his grand-daughter Margaret was far away across the North Sea at the court of her father, Eric, king of Norway. Scotland was ruled for a few years by 'Guardians', nobles and bishops who acted as a caretaker government for the young and absent Queen.

In 1289 the Norwegian King and Edward I of England arranged for the marriage of the young Queen Margaret, only six years of age, to Edward, the English King's five-year-old son. The Scottish Guardians, although willing that the marriage should take place, were afraid that the smaller kingdom would be swallowed up in the larger so they insisted that the marriage contract guaranteed 'the rights, laws, liberties and customs of Scotland'.

Edward I sent an English ship to Norway in May 1290 to fetch Margaret, but King Eric was determined that his daughter should sail in a Norwegian ship and be handed over to Scottish and English ambassadors in Orkney, which was the nearest Norwegian territory to Scotland. She was accompanied by Bishop Narve of Bergen and looked after by Fru Ingibiorg Erlingsdatter, sister of Alf Jarl and wife of Herr Thore Hakonson.

Perhaps the girl's health was delicate. Possibly the voyage was rough. Certainly Margaret was taken mortally ill. The first evidence that things had gone wrong is the following letter written by William Fraser, Bishop of St. Andrews, on the 7th of October, 1290.

To the most excellent...Edward, by the grace of God most illustrious King of England, Lord of Ireland and Duke of Aquitaine...

As it was ordered lately in your presence, your ambassadors and the ambassadors of Scotland who had been sent to you and also some nobles of the kingdom of Scotland met at Perth...to hear your answer (about the guarantees asked for by the Guardians)...Which answer of yours being heard and understood the faithful nobles and a certain part of the community in Scotland returned infinite thanks to your Highness.

And your ambassadors and we set ourselves to hasten our steps towards Orkney to confer with the ambassadors of Norway for receiving our Lady the Queen, and for this we had prepared...But there sounded through the people a sorrowful rumour that our said Lady may be dead, on which account the kingdom of Scotland is disturbed...

And the rumour being heard...Sir Robert de Brus, who before did not intend to come to the meeting, came with a great following...There is fear of a general war.

I heard afterwards that our Lady recovered of her sickness, but she is still weak; and therefore we have agreed to remain about Perth, until we have certain news by the knights who are sent to Orkney what is the condition of our Lady... and if we have the accounts which we wish concerning her - which we await from day to day, we will be ready to set forth for those parts, as ordered...

If Sir John Balliol comes to your presence we advise you to take care so to treat with him so that whatever happens your honour and interests be preserved. If it turn out that our Lady has departed this life (may it not be so), let your excellency...approach the borders, for the consolation of the Scottish people and to prevent bloodshed...and set over them for King him who of right ought to have the succession, if he will follow your counsel...

Given at Leuchars on Saturday the morrow of St Faith the Virgin, in the year of our Lord 1290.

(Adapted from a translation of Nat.Mss Scot.i,no.lxx printed in A Source Book of Scottish History Vol.1, 2nd Edition 1958,pp.125-6)

A letter written by Bishop Audfinn of Bergen on 1st February 1320 throws more light on the sad events of 1290.

(King Eric of Norway)...had...one daughter by Queen Margaret, who by her father's command was to go to Scotland, who died in Orkney attended by Bishop Karve and in the presence of the best men who followed her from Norway as counselled and directed by her own father.

And when God had taken her soul, the Bishop and Sir Tore and others carried the corpse to Bergen, where her father had the coffin opened, and closely examined the body, and himself acknowledged that it was his daughter's corpse. Then he let her be buried beside his Queen Margaret in the stone wall on the north side of the Choir (at Bergen).

(Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Vol X, Part II, 1873-4, page 417, from Diplomatarium Norvegium.)

There was a tradition in Kirkwall that the Maid of Norway was buried under a slab of grey marble near the south-east pier of the choir in St Magnus Cathedral (B.H. Hossack: Kirkwall in the Orkneys, 1901, page 50. Presumably her coffin rested there until weather conditions permitted the voyage back to Norway, just as the coffin of King Hakon Hakonson had been buried temporarily in St Magnus Cathedral, during the winter of 1263-4, after he had died in the Bishop's Palace.

A letter of 1801 mentions the discovery of a small wooden box containing a cap and ribbons in one of the pillars of St Magnus Cathedral opposite to the supposed resting place of the Maid of Norway (Orkney Archives, DIO, George Chalmers to James Riddoch, 16 May 1801).

At the end of the Middle Ages there was a chapel dedicated to St Margaret at Ronaldsvoe in South Ronaldsay. We do not know when this chapel was built and we do not know whether it was dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch or to Margaret of Scotland. There is no evidence that this chapel had any connection with the Maid of Norway and no evidence that rules out such a connection.

Ronaldsvoe was well-known to the Norwegians and King Hakon's fleet stayed there in 1263. South Ronaldsay is close to Scotland and a convenient place for handing over the Maid of Norway to the Scottish and English ambassadors who travelled north by land and ferry. It is therefore possible that the Maid died at Ronaldsvoe and that the tiny local chapel, one of seven or more urisland chapels on the island, was refurbished and rededicated to the dead girl's name saint. However, it must be emphasised that any link between Ronaldsvoe (now called St Margaret's Hope) and the Maid of Norway is just an interesting possibility, the theory is certainly not proven.

Ray Fereday.