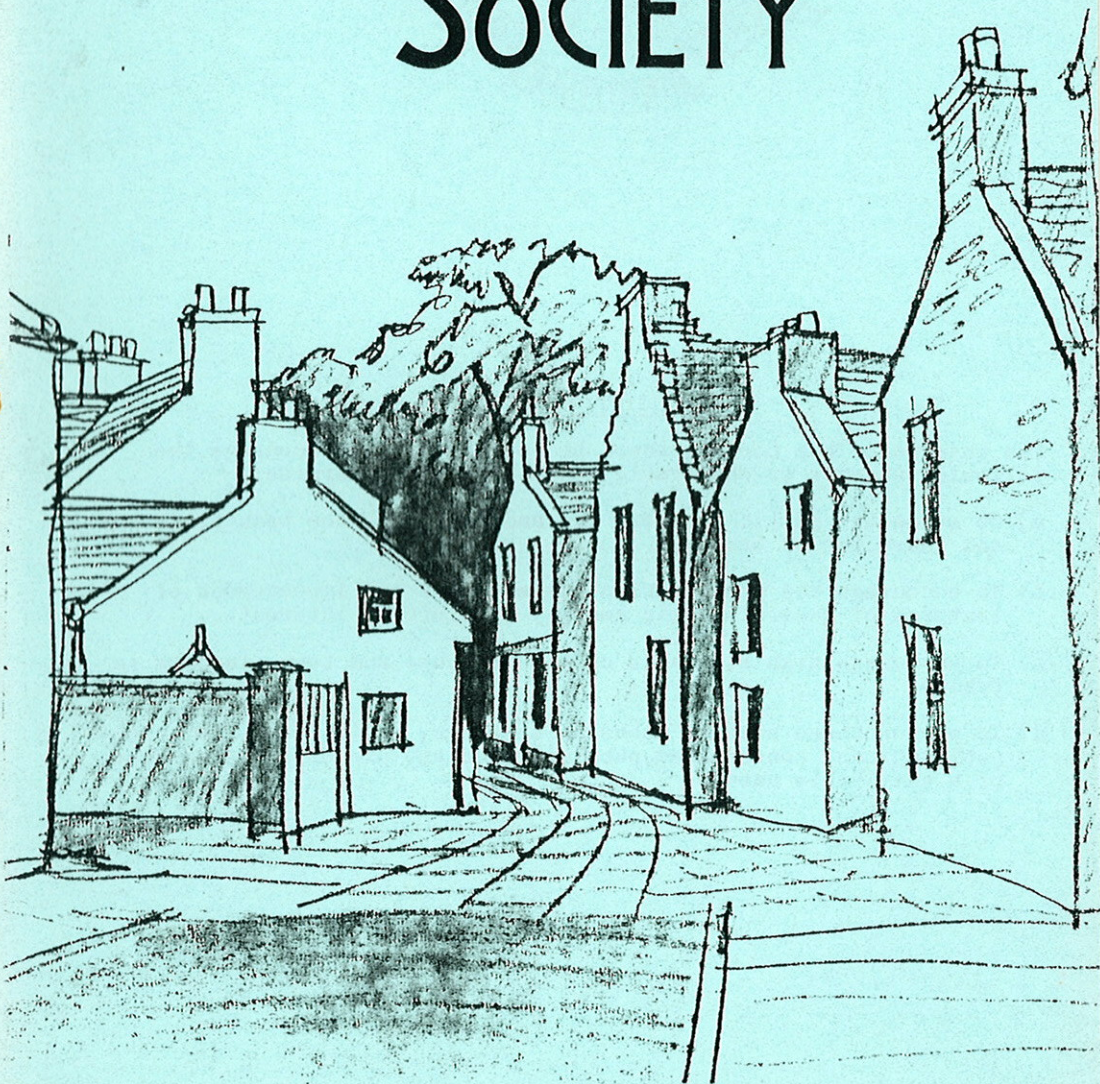
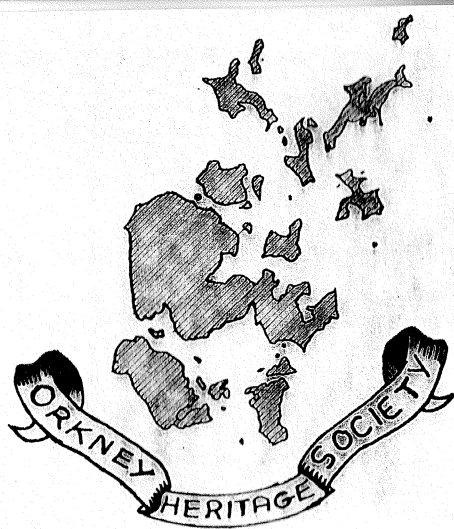


ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY





THE SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES

The objects of the Society shall be to promote and encourage the following objects by charitable means, but not otherwise:

- a) To stimulate public interest in, and care for, the beauty, history and character of Orkney.
- b) To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historic interest.
- c) To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in Orkney.
- d) To pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, conferences, publicity and the promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY

PRESIDENTThe Rev. H.L. Mooney
Hon.VICE PRESIDENTLady Grimond
CHAIRMANMr Iain Heddle
VICE CHAIRMANMiss Mary Bain
SECRETARYMrs Marjorie Linklater
TREASURERMr Brodie Ross.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Mr Beverley Smith (Chairman Archaeological Sub-Committee);
Mr W.L.P. Thomson (Literary Editor)*;
Mr Peter Leith; Mr A.J. Firth; Mr David Lea; Mr A.D. Walsh;
Mrs Elizabeth Bevan; Mr T. Sinclair; Mr Robert Swanney;
Mr Paul Sutherland; Dr. R.G. Lamb*; Mr A.J. Hicks.

C O N T E N T S

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR	Iain Heddle
SECRETARY'S REPORT	Marjorie Linklater
TREASURER'S REPORT	Brodie Ross
ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT	R.G. Lamb
ISLAND OF SWONA	Alex T. Annal
DEFENCE OF SCAPA FLOW	W. Patrick Scott
SCAPA FLOW AND ITS WRECKS	David Ferguson

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

The Heritage Society's Outings are not the most important features of the year's activities but they are always enjoyable, so I regret missing the May trip to Melsetter (we were celebrating our Ruby Wedding with our family) , and was all the more determined to get to Gairsay the following month. We were somewhat dismayed when we saw the alternative landing slip ('slip' being the operative word!) The exceptionally low tide had made landing at the Langskaill pier inoperable. However, our unique Coastguard Officer, Sue Nelson, helped us safely ashore. The welcome by the McGill family at Langskaill banished all recollection of peril. Lively controversy as to the exact location of Sweyn Asliefssin's drinking hall was never quite resolved but for some, measured by the hospitality of Valerie and David McGill, no other site than Langskaill itself could be accepted.

We are now forty years on from the end of War in Europe, and memories of the Garrison in Orkney will soon be restricted to a comparatively small number of people in the islands. Already those over 50 are the only ones who remember it all clearly. Is it not time for us to get a proper map of all the islands drawn up showing all the camp-sites, gun emplacements, searchlights, pill-boxes etc? Then the visitors of the future (descendants of those stationed here perhaps) could see where the various military naval and RAF defences were situated. This idea occurred to me recently when I came across someone who has mapped out military sites in the Stromness area. I think we should cover all the islands in reasonable detail for the sake of those born long after the menace of bombs and mines becomes a memory.

I hope this suggestion will meet with positive interest as there is a real contribution to be made in this way to augment the Lyness scheme - an imaginative plan to transform the Naval Base into a tourist attraction with a Maritime Museum focused on Scapa Flow and its wartime history. It is a great scheme and will include a trail to Longhope and the Martello Tower, arsenal and Barracks, relics of the Napoleonic wars.

I hope this scheme will go ahead - it will progressively add greatly to the interest within the islands. There have already been photographs taken of the old oil-tanks coming down; can we hope that there will be progress pictures of the museum being formed and the landscaping created to complete the scheme?

Orkney Heritage Society: Newsletter 1985.

1984 started with a storm which caused immense damage to the piers and slipways in Stromness. In response to an appeal from the Stromness Community Council, the Heritage Society supported a plea for financial aid by the Orkney Islands Council to ensure that special attention be directed towards the ultimate appearance of the restoration. In fact the O.I.C. met the extra cost required to maintain the traditional character of these piers, walls and slipways - 50% of the cost coming from the O.I.C. Heritage Fund.

The Secrets of the Howe were revealed by Beverley Smith when she described the five years excavations and records carried out on the Howe - a Broch site on the outskirts of Stromness. The site was rescued from oblivion, initially by John Hedges; but the "secrets" were discovered when Ms Smith took over from him. It was she who found, not just a Broch Tower surrounded by dwellings, but a Broch built on top of a Round House beneath which is a Neolithic Tomb.

Melsetter House on a perfect Sunday in May - blue-bell time rather than daffodils - is a different kind of revelation. It has been designated the house of architectural value (in the U.K.) for 1898. Elsie Seatter's knowledge of every detail of architecture, furnishing and design (Lethaby the architect and William Morris, the inspired decorator and furnisher), makes her the ideal guide.

A visit to the Martello Tower, Barracks and Arsenal in Longhope followed. The Islands Council intends to create in Hoy a major Tourist complex from Lyness, an important Naval Base in two World Wars, to the Martello Tower and Arsenal which were the defence against possible French invasion in the Napoleonic wars. A Maritime Museum is planned and reconstruction of some of the camp sites and features of the base when 15,000 men and women were stationed in Lyness. The Heritage Society heartily welcomes the scheme.

The Strynd All is set for a stone plaque to be inserted on the face of the restored houses, inscribed simply "These buildings were presented to the Orkney Islands Council by the Orkney Heritage Society 1979". A question of costs etc still has to be decided.

The Italian Chapel There is marked evidence of deterioration of the fabric over the last year. Now that it has been 'listed' it is to be hoped that the Preservation Committee will fulfill its obligation to make sure that the chapel survives - a unique memorial to the spirit of man.

We said goodbye to Dr. R.P. Fereday, a founder member of this Society and a most excellent historian. His monographs on various aspects of local history are invaluable. As a tribute to him, the O.H.S. is offering an annual prize to Sixth Year pupils at Kirkwall Grammar School for an essay on any part of Orkney history; to be called The Fereday Prize. The Recorder W.P.L. Thomson, who is also our Literary Editor, has undertaken to organise this.

The Constitution was amended at the A.G.M. permitting the Executive Committee to adjust the subscription rates according to requirements. Life Members are the back-bone of the Society and many joined when the subscription was only £5.00! We hope there will be a favourable response to the revised subscription as explained in the Treasurer's Report.

The year began with a storm and ends with another - a storm in teacup. The Heritage Society reacted quite vigorously to a report of a meeting of the O.I.C. at which the Convener accused the Heritage Society of failing to support the Council's proposal to license all small boats in order to protect the German wrecks in the Flow from pilfering by subaqua divers. We are concerned about these maritime artefacts, but do not believe that this kind of tiresome restriction will protect them. Naturally the Convener's words as reported in The Orcadian "the Heritage Society and other bodies" who had supported the Council's policy had "scuttled like rabbits into their holes", was not to pass unchallenged! So a fairly brisk correspondence is under way.

Two of the contributions in this Newsletter are about the war history of Orkney and in particular Scapa Flow and Lyness. This is appropriate in the 40th anniversary of 'D' Day. The two major wars of the 20th century will soon look like European Civil Wars, and succeeding generations will doubtless look back on them as we look back on Cromwell's wars - barbaric, savage, and in line with the Wars of the Roses. We just have to make sure there is never another.

PROGRAMME FOR 1985

Thursday 7th March Talk with illustration by Maurice Sargent, Chief Official, Planning Department, O.I.C.

Maurice Sargent is leaving the O.I.C. at the end of March and this will be an opportunity for the Society to say farewell.

Saturday April 27th Outing with Go Orkney. A Tour of South Ronaldsay, visiting the Church at Burwick, the Wireless Museum - St. Margaret's Hope, and Brigadier Dennison's Gazebo. Our guide will be David Lea, who is acknowledged to be expert in all aspects of the countryside, especially birds.

Numbers will be strictly limited. Forward booking can be made with Miss M. Bain at The Dairy, Junction Road, up to the middle of April. After that, all bookings will be handled by the Secretary, Mrs M. Linklater, 20 Main Street, Kirkwall (3619). Tickets £3.50. Tea has been offered by one of our Committee - Mr Hicks, Grahamstown, South Ronaldsay.

Saturday June 15th Outing to Eday; (See Archaeologists Report). The Golden Marianna leaves Kirkwall Harbour at 2 pm. Leaves Eday 9 pm. Details of costs and catering to be advertised later.

STOP PRESS The Heritage Society joins the protest against the dumping of Nuclear Waste in the Stormy Bank sea area. The Government has authorised a feasibility study to be made. Members will remember the campaign against test-boring for Uranium in Orkney. "They're no' coming, and they're no' digging", was the slogan. This goes for any attempt to consider burying nuclear waste in the sea around our coasts - one of the regular fishing areas in these parts. We have written to The Orkney Islands Council in support of any action possible to prevent the feasibility study. Further commitment will no doubt follow.

Notes on Contributors

ALEXANDER ANNAL, known to his friends as 'Sandy', was born and brought up in South Ronaldsay. He cherishes happy memories of his school teacher at Thomison's Academy "a marvellous lady who could make you feel important and willing to learn". The first money he earned - £10 for six month's work - he spent on a new dinghy from Sabiston, boat builders, costing £8.10/- and £1.10/- for a sail.

He married Eva Rosie who lived on the Island of Swona, which he now owns.

Alexander Annal was a County Councillor and an Orkney Islands Councillor but lost his seat at the last election. He campaigned successfully for the pier at Burwick and the short sea crossing.

DAVID FERGUSON qualified as a mining engineer, specialising in precious metals. He was employed in this capacity in Nigeria, but with increasing Africanisation his employment ended and he came back to take over his mother's house in Stromness. He comes of mining stock, his grand-father - an Aberdonian - having been a pioneer of silver mining in South America.

David's book The Wrecks in Scapa Flow is to be published soon by the Orkney Press.

W. PATRICK SCOTT Pat Scott has lived in Sandwick for 50 years. In 1935 he and his wife arrived in Orkney when he took up an appointment as Manager of Highland Park Distillery. Walter Grant was at that time Chairman and was eventually succeeded by Pat.

He commanded the 226 A.A. Battery when war broke out and later became Liaison Officer at O.S.D.E.F. (Orkney and Shetland Defences.)

Pat has taken a keen interest in the Boy Scouts of which he is Orkney County Commissioner. He is also Deputy Lieutenant of Orkney and an Hon. Sheriff Substitute.



Italian Chapel

TREASURER'S REPORT

Most Organisations are continually faced with rising costs and our Society is no different. I am pleased to report that up until now we have managed to meet our commitments although, when we project outgoings for the next 12 months, it would appear that the Society may end up with a small deficit. , should action not be taken now to put matters on their proper footing.

Some action has already been taken, and I can report that Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Ltd have provided a fresh Deed of Covenant to the Society for £6,000 per annum for the next 5 years. The first of these payments have now been received, and with the Tax we can reclaim thereon, the overall sum will go a long way towards covering Dr. Lamb's annual salary payment.

At the Annual General Meeting, it was agreed that Subscriptions should be increased to the following:-

Life Subscriptions	£20.00
Annual Subscriptions	Adult..£3.00
	- Child..£1.00
	-Family..£7.00

It would be beneficial if as many annual subscriptions as possible were paid by Bankers Order, and a Form is attached which could be completed and forwarded direct to your Bank. You will also note that it is now possible to obtain a Family Membership at a very reasonable cost.

It has also been decided to write, in the first instance, to all life members to ask if they would consider giving an annual payment by way of Deed of Covenant over a Four Year period. The Society could then claim back the Tax on these payments, and we are sure that if members helped in this way then the Society's cashflow problems could be alleviated for the next few years. Each Life Member will receive a separate letter in this connection over the next few weeks.

.....Treasurer.

EDAY TOURIST ZONE

R.G. Lamb

The O.I.C. Planning Department is collaborating with Eday Community Co-op and Community Council to set up, with the active co-operation of Mrs Joy, the landowner, an historical walk which will be a major tourist attraction for this under-developed island. The centrepiece will be the Maeshowe-type chambered tomb on Vinquoy Hill which will be re-excavated in the early summer of 1985, then repaired and re-roofed so as to restore it to its original condition. Under the 1979 Ancient Monuments Act, local Authorities have the same powers as the Government, to take monuments such as this into public guardianship. With Government cuts, we cannot look forward to the State's taking over any further sites, so it is important that Orkney Islands Council use these powers and develop future projects for itself. This is an important principle, that the tourist resource which archaeological monuments constitute, should be developed by the Council for the benefit of the local community.

The excavation will be done by Mrs Jacqui Marwick and her team from Rousay, while the mason work will be undertaken by a local contractor. The tomb and the walk will be served by an "interpretation centre" in the tea-room of Eday Co-op's premises. and it is hoped that a good quality souvenir guide book will be produced. All these aspects of the overall tourist development should attract support from the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

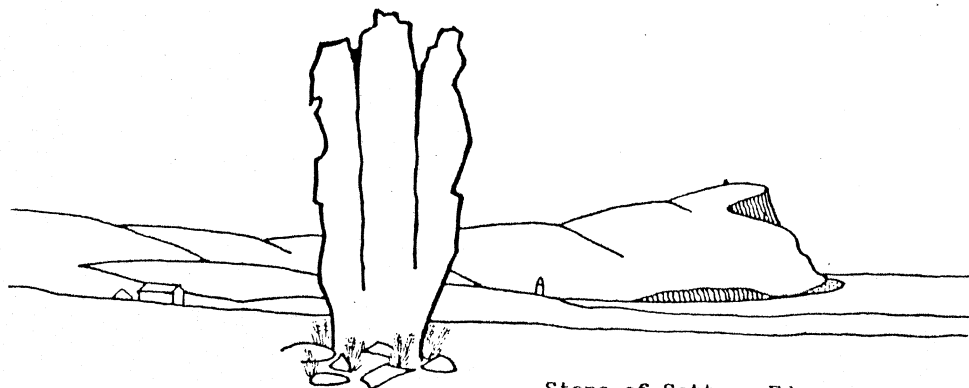
The project is modest in its financial scale, as befits the first such project which O.I.C. has undertaken. If it is successful, and proves the contribution which archaeology can make to the tourist development of areas which, like Eday, badly need it, it is to be hoped that it will lead both to a considerably more ambitious second-phase development in Eday itself, and to further such projects elsewhere in Orkney.

SANDAY CONFERENCE

R.G. Lamb

The Scottish Society for Northern Studies held its annual conference in Sanday from 4th April to 9th April. Arrangements were hurried, as this conference had been intended for 1985, but the sudden cancellation, brought about by an unexpected change in shipping routes of a planned Faeroese gathering, led to a request to bring Sanday forward. This is thought to be the first such conference which has been attempted in one of the outer islands, where normally expected facilities - notably a large tourist hotel - are at first sight lacking; and certain Kirkwall worthies, on learning of the plan expressed doubts that it could be done. In fact the lack of a big well insulated hotel proved a big advantage; members were accommodated in the small family run Kettletoft Hotel and in homes around the island, and the meetings for lectures and communal meals took place in the Community Hall. In this way, the visitors had much better opportunity to meet islanders, who also swelled the numbers at the lectures and provided an exceptionally good Saturday-night entertainment. It is my experience that when such a conference is held in a tourist hotel, one hardly meets the local people at all.

The archaeological and local cultural interest of Sanday is, of course, very great, and this conference demonstrated that an island such as this, can accommodate a large number of visitors, and give them a really enjoyable time, using just the ordinary resources of the island.



Stone of Setter, Eday

SITES AND MONUMENT LISTS SERIES

R.G. Lamb

The Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments is now printing the fourth Orkney List, which covers Eday and Stronsay with their adjacent small islands. The Commission has now adopted a new distribution policy, instead of circulating a limited number of the pamphlets to favoured individuals as before, it will sell them in the ordinary way through a bookseller (Stromness Books & Prints). This will greatly amplify the distribution in that anyone wanting a copy will now be able to buy one; previously, the number of copies available was never sufficient to enable everyone to have one.

THE ISLAND OF SWONA (SWEYN'AY)

Alex T. Annal.

There is much I could write about this Isle which is a very romantic place to live, but I have always refrained from doing so, partly from modesty, and partly because of embarrassment to dwellers of the Isle. However, with persuasion, and for Orkney Heritage Society, I now find my pen moving along the line on this paper. I married the last bride who will ever leave this beautiful Isle. No one could have been a better wife; she shared my troubles and my joys through many difficult years.

I have often heard her say Swona is two separate places - the rugged cliffs, the mountainous waves and the savage tide, like a wild animal trying to tear the place to pieces - that is what is seen from the outside; but the other Isle is the same place seen when you are living on the Island - green field down to the edge of the sea, lovely sea flowers growing from decayed seaweed amid the flat rocks - cows slowly moving towards the house when milking time approaches - bullocks trained to drag the plough, wild birds planting themselves on the ground a few feet away from you and starting an argument in their gull language, so interesting that you wish you could only understand them, seals who made their home a few yards from the garden wall and young ones that would like you to pat them. James Rosie would be in his workshop, either making a new boat or repairing one, for he was a skilful craftsman - and there was always the tide rushing past, that created music like the throb of some huge organ, with birds providing the high pitched notes.

I will now take you back two thousand years and portray the coming of the first bride that came to the Island. Twienly was a young man, not very big, but possessed of a great imagination and very intelligent. He belonged to an Island west of Scotland, and as a boy, he started carrying water and firewood for one of the good men who had come from Eire to teach the Hebrideans the word of God and the laws of Moses, sprinkled no doubt with the terrors of Hell awaiting the unworthy. Twienly quickly realised this was a better way of living than having human beings sacrificed as an offering to make the waning moon come back again to give light at night.

The good man decided to travel as far north as the sea would allow him, and to proceed and pray for the people who dwelt in that wild region known as Kaithness. Twienly felt it his duty to accompany this good man, so he found himself dwelling on the coast of North Caithness where John De Groot had the place named after him 1600 years later.

Twienly fell in love with a beautiful curly haired Pictish girl - but the Picts would not allow one of their girls to marry a Celtic man - their natural enemies. Twienly was a dark haired Celt, so not acceptable to the Picts; so after many secret meetings with his loving bride, they decided to leave Katness and go to a distant Isle lying across many miles of water to the north.

Twienly had learned from the good man that if one gave a great deal of time to thought and meditation, that ideas would evolve in your mind and that guidance would come from the great good spirit that dwelt on high.

Twienly longed to get to one of the distant Isles lying to the north where no Pict had ever tried to go. The Picts believed that anyone who tried to go north over the swirling tides would be drawn into the Swilkie where the water in the Firth poured down through a massive hole in the bottom of the sea, right down to Hell. Twienly saw that at different times the water went east, then after a while it turned and went west - but before it started going west, it would go straight north to the Island of his dreams, so Twienly made a small raft from reeds with a tree a few feet long fixed on top. He could see his raft going many miles to the north if he put it on the sea when the tide started to flow. He sent off many rafts before he was confident his plan would succeed. Twienly knew how to make a coracle from cane bent into a circle with loops of cane fixed across and covered with goat skins sewn together with a bone needle and dried gut.

Twienly must take everything he required with him. He would require at least four coracles, one for his bride Dala and one for himself and one to carry the grinding quern, his wooden spade and some grain for seed. He knew he must grow grain and cabbage although the Islands would have abundance of shell fish, and with his fishing line made from hair from a horses tail, he could catch fish. In the fourth coracle, he carried two goats trussed up and lying on the floor of the coracle.

Twienly waited for a calm day when the Firth was smooth, then at the same time of tide as when he had sent off the rafts, he got Dala and they crept down to the shore where their coracles were hidden - quickly pushed off on the sea, paddled a few strokes and were out on the north going tide, all four coracles tied together with heather simmons. Three quarters of an hour later the coracles were cast ashore at Kerling Geo on the Isle of Swona. Six years ago the whole crew of a German trawler that sank many miles away were cast ashore in two rubber rafts at Kerling Geo - this is a focal point on Swona where you will be swept ashore by the tide at certain times.

Twienly found no people there - it was his Island. Dala and he would build a home and rear a family. Twienly spent some time on deciding where to have his home. He found a loch on the Island and plenty of nice square stones nearby to build his home and krus (enclosures) to hold his goats and protect his cabbages, with plenty of flat flagstones to roof his house and cover his skeos that would store his dried fish safe from wild birds; and there was deep black soil in which to grow grain.

Twienly and Dala worked hard and built a very substantial house with big square stones and clay in the centre of the wall to seal out the wind and rain with flagstones on the roof. The walls of this building are still standing: size 14 ft x 10 ft and is known as Twienlykirk.

Twienly and Dala were very happy, but many years had passed and they were both puzzled why Dala had not borne children.

Dala was now older than any of her tribe that had ever borne children, but one day she suddenly realised that she would have a child - Twienly was delighted. The big day arrived. Dala had a very difficult labour and the baby after a few days died and Twienly sadly dug a very shallow grave as was the Celtic custom, and covered the grave with a large mound of earth. Dala died of grief a few days later, so Twienly suffering unbearable grief, buried her 20 yards west of her baby under a mound of earth.

Some of the Oddies who lived at Osmondwall noticed that no smoke was rising from Swona Isle, so they crossed over to see what could be wrong. They found Twienly dying of grief over his tragic loss. He passed away in their presence. The Oddies buried Twienly 20 yards west from Dala.

Ernest Marwick and myself discovered these three mounds at the Tarf in Swona at a place where the outline of tiny fields can be seen; he knew this was the typical style of burial about two thousand years ago.

DEFENCE OF SCAPA FLOW 45 YEARS AGO.

W. Patrick Scott.

Forty-five years ago we were at war with Germany - and Orkney, with its great naval anchorage of Scapa Flow, was to play a key part in the defence of Great Britain.

In September 1939 the warships of the Home Fleet with all their ancillary vessels were in the Flow. In the main Fleet Anchorage just north of Flotta were the battleships Rodney and Nelson, the battle cruisers Hood, Repulse and Renown, the aircraft carriers Ark Royal and Glorious. To the north in the Flow was the vanguard of these brave armed merchant vessels which did such sterling work against the enemy in the early days of the war. The Royal Oak was anchored off Gaitnip on the east shore, just south of Scapa Pier. The destroyers, with the Iron Duke flying the flag of the Admiral Commanding Orkney and Shetland in Gutter Sound. The Dunluce Castle, the Royal Navy Depot Supply Ship was off Lyness.

In September 1939, 226 A.A. Battery R.A.(T.A.) were stationed with their 4.5" guns flanking Lyness. The Navy Section was at Rysa Lodge, and the Caithness Section at Ore. On Flotta, at Stanger Head was a detachment of the Orkney Heavy Regiment of Royal Artillery guarding the main approach to this anchorage with some Orkney (Fortress) Company Royal Engineers T.A. to man the searchlights in support. Other detachments of the same Territorial Army Units were at Ness Battery beside the Golf Course west of Stromness to guard the western entrance of Hoy Sound. A single anti-submarine boom net stretched between Flotta and South Ronaldshay with a "gate" to allow ships free passage, the same between Switha and South Walls, and an uncompleted boom between Switha and Scad Head.

Just north of Kirkwall, Hatston was being finished and used by Skua, Walrus and Swordfish aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm.

Later in September, Brigadier Kemp arrived in Stromness as Area Commander with two Staff Officers, and set up his Headquarters in the Stromness Hotel. One Infantry Battalion, the 7th Gordon Highlanders also arrived, and were stationed in small billets in the Mainland.

In early October H.M. King George VI visited the Home Fleet and the uncompleted Hatston aerodrome. Contingents of the 7th Gordon Highlanders, 226 A.A. Battery R.A.(T.A.), and Orkney Heavy and Garrison Troops formed a Guard of Honour on Scapa Pier.

and low clouds tearing across the sky driven by (their herdsman) the west wind. As the day went on, the wind dropped and a slight mist came up from the south east. It was the period of full moon and big tides, and that night a German U-boat slipped through a gap in the block ships in Kirk Sound on the surface. (The sixth block ship that was to close the gap was, at that precise moment, on tow off Wick.)

The submarine crept along as near as possible to the low cliffs in the east side of the Flow until it came opposite to the Royal Oak, where it fired a salvo of torpedoes from the landward side. Only one torpedo of that first salvo hit the battleship, a glancing blow in the forepeak. The Captain at first thought it might have been an internal explosion, as they had been loading ammunition that afternoon, and he sent down to investigate. He also thought it might have been a near miss from a bomb, and ordered the crew to close up on the guns.

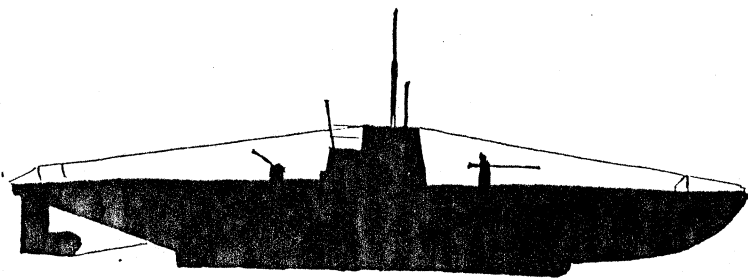
While they were investigating, the submarine worked its way round to the other side of the battleship which was then silhouetted against the low cliff.

Twenty minutes later she fired her second salvo of four torpedoes, scoring four direct hits, and blowing huge chunks out of the bottom of the ship. She sank in less than six minutes, with the Vice Admiral 2nd Battle Squadron's Flag flying. Both he and almost eight hundred and seventy brave men went down with their ship, although she was only a few hundred yards off land. Three hundred survivors were picked up by a drifter which had been lying alongside, and some forty to sixty men had managed to swim ashore.

HMS Royal Oak had been detached from the main Fleet Anchorage to guard the newly finished R.D.F. Station at Netherbutton.

When dawn broke that morning, there was not a large ship of the Home Fleet in the Flow. Three or four Tribal Class destroyers were dashing madly about the Flow, hurling off depth charges, in the vain hope of destroying the U-boat that had long ago made good its escape. The U-boat commanded by Unter-Seeboot Kapitan Gunther Prien, had slipped out of Kirk Sound on the surface of the same high tide, his mission most bravely and brilliantly executed.

On Saturday afternoon, October 14, the bodies of the few sailors who had been recovered, were buried in the Lyness Naval Cemetery. A bugle from 226 A.A. Battery sounded the Last Post. As the haunting notes of the bugle faded away, we had an almost suffocating feeling of sadness.



U47 - Type VIIB. Length 66.5 metres

On Tuesday 17 October, the first raid on the Flow by JU 88's was made. The Iron Duke was hit and one plane was shot down, and one of its crew captured - the first German prisoner to be captured on British soil.

The bomb that hit the Iron Duke had blown a hole of 25ft by 20ft, only one rating being killed by the blast. She heeled over to the danger angle, and the order was given to "Abandon Ship except for a cable party to remain on board". Just over an hour later, she was safely beached, and some of her crew returned on board.

There was another heavy raid that afternoon, but the only damage was near misses, springing several plates on the Voltaire, a depot ship. That evening, the flag of Admiral Commanding Orkney and Shetland was lowered on Iron Duke and hoisted in Lyness.

It was after the sinking of the Royal Oak and the air raids on the Flow that Winston Churchill, who had recently been appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, visited 226 Battery. He was wearing his Trinity House uniform, and smoking a large cigar, was in the best of humour.

Towards the end of 1939, we had coastal defence guns at Stanger Head and Ness, a few searchlights on Hoy and 4 Light Vickers Mk.VII single barrel A.A. guns round Netherbutton R.D.F. and Hatston aerodrome. The 7th Battalion Gordon Highlanders in the ground, a small staff at Area Headquarters in Stromness, and 226 Battery at Rysa and Ore, whose guns Admiral Commanding Orkney and Shetland always referred to as "his fore and aft gun turrets"

The situation from the R.A.F. point of view was that the Air Ministry decision to establish a Fighter Section for the air defence of Scapa Flow was made in November 1939. Pending the construction of Castletown aerodrome in Caithness, it was decided to make use of the Coastal Command Station at Wick, making provision for two Fighter Squadrons. At the end of 1939 we had No. 803 Squadron consisting of Skuas and Rocs at Wick, and No.804 Squadron, which consisted of 3 Gladiators at Hatston.

In early 1940 an event took place which made a great impact on the strategic importance to Scapa Flow. The Rawalpindi, an armed merchant cruiser of the 10th Cruiser Squadron, was sunk, after putting up an heroic fight against

overwhelming odds, by the pocket battleship Deutschland. Our Home Fleet, scattered over various Anchorages on the West Coast of Scotland, after the raids of October 1939 in the Flow, had already suffered from German mining efforts. They had an extra two hundred miles to steam before they could intercept the Deutschland. It was this extra steaming time that allowed the German ship to escape to her lair. It was thus imperative to make Scapa Flow safe for the Home Fleet.

From the end of 1939 to the Spring of 1940 an unprecedented build up of forces took place. Heavy A.A. guns were to be organised in Regiments and Batteries and distributed as follows:-

- (a) H.Q. 70th A.A. Regiment at Lynnfield consisting of 16 x 4.5" guns and 16 x 3.7" guns.
- (b) H.Q. 64 A.A. Regiment in South Ronaldshay consisting also of 16 x 4.5" guns and 16 x 3.7" guns.
- (c) H.Q. 95 A.A. Regiment at Melsetter in Hoy, consisting of 16 x 4.5" guns and 8 x 3.7" guns.

Light A.A. guns were to be organised in Batteries and distributed as follows:-

Light A.A. Regiment Mainland with 12 x 2 pounders, 8 x 2 pounders on Hoy, 4 x 2 pounders on Cava, 12 x 2 pounders on Flotta, and 4 x 2 pounders on Fara.

A.A. Searchlights were to be organised in Regiments and Batteries and distributed as follows:-

- (a) H.Q. 62 Searchlight Regiment on Mainland with 54 Searchlights:
- (b) H.Q. 61 Searchlight Regiment in South Ronaldshay with 18 Searchlights in South Ronaldshay and 22 in Hoy.

There were to be 6 Searchlights in Flotta and 6 in Burray.

The 7th Battalion Gordon Highlanders were distributed as follows:-

H.Q. Company at Kirkwall; A. Coy. at Stromness; B Coy. at Finstown
C Coy. at Netherbutton; D Coy. at Holm; E Coy. at Wea Fea in Hoy.

Truly they were in penny packets, but in those days, it was the case of a few trying to do the job of many.

This was the set up completed by early March 1940 to meet the attacks of the Luftwaffe. Guns, a limited number of rounds of ammunition, very incomplete sites, with extremely primitive accommodation.

Things had greatly improved from the R.A.F. point of view. Castletown was nearly operational and in Caithness there were 3 R.A.F. Squadrons, Nos. 43; 111; and 605 all equipped with a dozen machines, including Hurricanes.

At the end of February 1940, two dummy battleships and a dummy aircraft carrier came into the Flow escorted by destroyers and Avro-Ansons of Coastal Command. The bait did not tempt the Hun. It was on March 3rd 1940 that the Home Fleet returned. What a thrill to see the great ships come quietly to their appointed anchorages. By noon they were all in.

Between March 16 and to the end of April 1940 there were several very determined attacks on the Flow by the Luftwaffe, headed by their famous Red Lion Squadron. Our answer was to put up a fixed barrage above the Fleet which was very effective in breaking up even formations.

The Rev. Tubby Clayton, who was staying with us at Rysa was a tower of strength, as when we were manning at night, he would bring round cups of hot OXO laced with whisky. I remember him shouting above the din, and when the sky was full of a myriad colours - "Hundreds of people would pay pounds to see a fireworks show like this!" May 1940 saw the end of the raids in the Flow.

By now the German war machine had been unleashed in its full fury, and after the evacuation from Dunkirk, we all in Scapa Flow lived in a period of tense expectation. Indeed the way of man seemed so dark, so wrapped in peril and uncertainty, one dare not think too much of the future.

SCAPA FLOW AND ITS WRECKS.

David Ferguson

Scapa Flow, the strategic northern fleet anchorage of two world wars, boasts a remarkable collection of British and German wrecks. The best known of these are the unsalvaged remains of the German High Seas Fleet which was scuttled on 21st June 1919. In one of the most extraordinary acts of self destruction, more than 400,000 tons of shipping went to the bottom in a little over three hours. Other German warship wrecks consist of World War I U-boat and a World War II escort vessel.

The most obvious of the British wrecks, the remains of anti-submarine block ships are to be seen as one crosses the Churchill Barriers linking Orkney's Mainland to South Ronaldshay. A small number of block ships were also sunk in Burra Sound between Graemsay and Hoy. The waters of Scapa Flow also conceal the remains of two British battleships - HMS Vanguard and HMS Royal Oak sunk in World War I and World War II respectively with great loss of life.

The principal German warship wrecks consist of three battleships and four light cruisers. Their condition varies from the fragmentary, e.g. the Karlsruhe, a light cruiser, almost completely blasted apart during salvage operations; to the substantially complete, e.g. the battleship Markgraf. When scuttled, these ships were, apart from having no ammunition on board, completely intact fighting units, ready for action. A German U-boat, the UB 116 was sunk by a controlled minefield in Hoxa Sound while trying to enter Scapa Flow on October 28th 1918. Subsequent depth charging completed the vessel's destruction. A German escort vessel, the F.2, sank while anchored in Gutter Sound in December 1946.

A total of 43 block ships were sunk with varying degrees of success in World Wars I and II. At the beginning of World War II it was possible for a German U-boat to slip into Scapa Flow between block ships in the Holm Sound and torpedo the battleship HMS Royal Oak on October 14th 1939. She sank at her moorings with the loss of most of her crew. The battleship HMS Vanguard blew up and sank on 23rd July 1917 while anchored off Flotta when unstable cordite in her magazines ignited. Again there was massive loss of life.

Historically, the scuttled German High Seas Fleet warships are unique with no other examples surviving. The Turkish warship Yavuz ex Goeben, a contemporary of the scuttled High Seas Fleet, was broken up in the 1970's. Other examples of early warships survive, e.g. the U.S.S. Olympia, the Chilean ironclad HUSSCAR, and the Aurora in Russia, but pre-date the remaining German wrecks. Thus the sole surviving examples from the Dreadnought era are the 7 German warships lying at the bottom of Scapa Flow. The historical significance cannot be emphasised too fully, and it is therefore vitally important that they and their contents are protected against the depredations of pilfering divers. They date from a time when capital ships formed a vital part of the complex equation governing diplomatic and military relations between the European Great Powers immediately prior to and during the First World War.

Footnote

The wreck of HMS Royal Oak is protected by being a designated war grave, which specifically prohibits unauthorised diving. It is expected that similar protection will be extended to the wreck of HMS Vanguard in the near future.