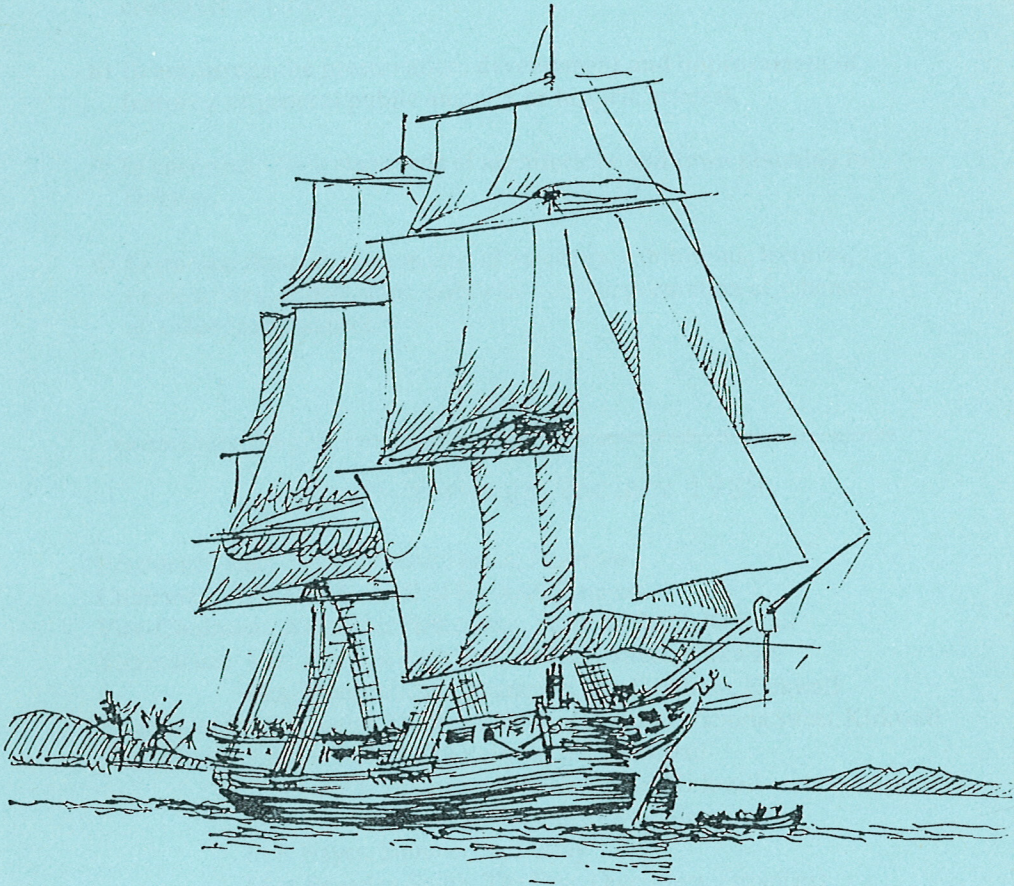
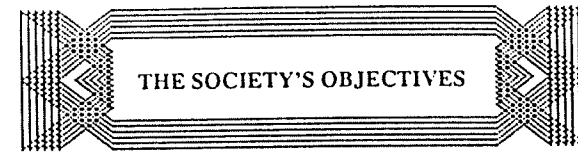


ORKNEY  
HERITAGE  
SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER 1989



The aims of the Society shall be to promote and encourage the following objectives 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.

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### Orkney Heritage Society 1989

**President:** Lady Grimond, Old Manse, Finstown  
**Chairman:** Iain Heddle, Mill of Eyrlund, Stenness  
**Vice-Chairman:** Alexander Firth, Edan, Berstane Road, Kirkwall  
**Secretaries:** Mrs. Marjorie Linklater, 20 Main Street, Kirkwall  
Mrs. Mona Sinclair, Skaraness, The Quadrant, Kirkwall  
**Treasurer:** Brian Douglas, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Victoria Street, Kirkwall  
**Committee:** Alistair Tulloch, 29 Reid Crescent, Kirkwall  
William P L Thomson, Papdale House, Kirkwall  
A D Welsh, Ultima Thule, Outertown, Stromness  
M R Hayes, Summerlea, Burray  
Miss Beverley Smith, The Don, Outertown, Stromness  
Mrs. Elizabeth Bevan, 9 Ness Road, Stromness  
Peter Leith, Appiehouse, Stenness  
J A F Hicks, Grahamston, St. Margaret's Hope  
Mrs. Ann Brundle, Hillside School, Birsay

## EDITORIAL

Our particular and relatively unpolluted environment is again under threat by the inclusion of Dounreay with Sellafield as the now preferred options for nuclear waste dumping. We were under threat earlier of Uranium mining in Orkney. That most gentle of men, Ernest Marwick, was prepared for civil disobedience to prevent it.

What are we to do if Dounreay is chosen?

The waste must be stored in safety somewhere for thousands of years and NIREX seem to want it underground. The people of Caithness will be promised jobs to compensate for those lost in the rundown of Dounreay. The South East of England will feel safe with a dump in what they probably perceive as the wilds of the North of Scotland. Unlike the four English sites which were under threat some time ago, we don't have Tory representation and probably not many vote Tory now.

Two attitudes are recommended. We should oppose dumping in Caithness if the remoteness and paucity of population are advanced as reasons for that choice. This is an admission of doubt about safety. And what ever site is chosen, a condition of its use must be the ending of production of any more nuclear waste.

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### Obituary - Wilfred Marr

Since our last issue we have lost a good friend in the death of Wilfred Marr. Wilfie printed many issues of this magazine and contributed greatly to our heritage when he took over the printing office in Stromness and continued its long tradition of high craftsmanship in every kind of printed matter. He has left a collection of excellent photographs of Orkney, some paintings and the memory of a quiet and dedicated craftsman who was a pleasure to know.

Ian MacInnes.

## FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

It is now just over five years since that ferocious south-easterly gale tore into Stromness Harbour and did enormous damage to the waterfront. The Double-houses pier was swept away and it is still in precisely that same condition, in spite of many attempts by the Community Council to get funds for its reinstatement. From the south it looks normal, as the face-wall is still standing, but the huge gap, as seen from north and east, allows the sea to almost lap over the eastern houses.

These fine listed houses are the very essence of old Stromness! They are, I believe, unique in being built "back-to-back".

Who have we got in our membership who can stir some action from various bodies to get this famous landmark reinstated? The Historic Buildings Council, Coastal Protection, OIC and EEC all have the ability to help get this done if only someone could get them all to agree to do something!

Members of this society have, over the years, had many successes in saving lovely parts of Orkney and lovely buildings in Orkney from being spoiled or demolished. It is with pleasure that I read how the OIC and Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council are really getting down to negotiating the removal of the BP oil tanks to a site remote from the domestic buildings by the harbour. Our Hon. Secretary, Marjorie Linklater, began all this some 3 or 4 years ago and she must be given credit for her great initiative.

The Fleet Air Arm Control Tower at Twatt is to be preserved and converted into some form of Museum/Display Centre - Sandy Scarth was responsible for the quick action to stop the demolition of this World War II relic, which meant so much to the gallant aircrews who flew from there. Let us hope that the current enthusiasm for this project is sufficient to bring it to fruition.

So now I return to the Double-Houses Pier - Who can help to get this subject well to the front of the queue for Aid?

Ian Magnus Heddle

# HMS Tern

by Gregor Lamb

When electricity was introduced to Orphir a linesman knocked on a cottage door and told the old lady that she could now switch on her electric light. "My that's grand", she said, "ah'll just go right away and pit the oil lamp ower the face o' the shore". In our personal lives it is a problem for us to decide what to keep and what to destroy. If we decide to get rid of an oil lamp, that is, apparently, easy. If, on the other hand, it's something large, like a building for example, the cost of the destruction would have to be set against the potential value of the site.

The Fleet Air Arm Station at Twatt in Birsay was commissioned on 1 April, 1941. It remained an operational base for more than five years, the home of Squadrons 700 and 771 and, during that time, it acted as host to twelve visiting squadrons. It was a busy place with a capacity for fifty aircraft. There were more than 300 naval men on site as well as an encampment of Royal Marines and Wrens. It had its own large generating station, telephone exchange, hospital, cinema and theatre where Yehudi Menuhin and Gracie Fields, among others, played to a packed house. It had its own newspaper, the 'Jabberwock'. It had a fine squash court, football, hockey and rugger teams.

When, on 31 July 1945, Grumman Avengers and Wildcats of 846 Squadron made their final dash down the runway, the bustle ended and Twatt became like a ghost town. The navy, unlike the other services in Orkney, held on to its property after the war and it wasn't until 1956, eleven years after the war was over that it finally relinquished control. The land was sold off by auction in three lots to Orkney farmers. Some of the land could be easily reinstated to agriculture but other parts were densely covered with buildings on concrete foundations. Some of the buildings were blast proof and for the farmers to attempt to move them was out of the question, it was simply uneconomic. Fortunately for the farmers, it was an out of the way corner of Orkney and there was no pressure put on them to clear the site and so, by default, much was

conserved.

In 1986, thirty years after the site had returned to civilian hands, the situation changed when the Islands Council was offered the services of Army workgroups to undertake community projects. Accordingly, the council approached farmers on whose land war relics still remained to enquire whether they would like the sites cleared at no expense to themselves. In this connection a team of army engineers went to Twatt with the aim of demolishing one of the largest extant wartime structures on the Mainland, the control tower of Twatt aerodrome.

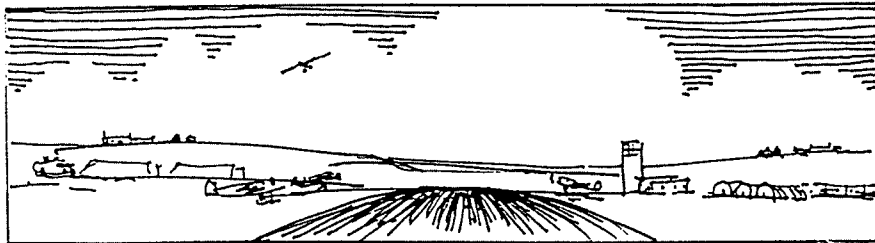
At a meeting of the Birsay Community Council, a local farmer, Sandy Scarth, told members that, the very next day, the Control Tower at Twatt was to be blown up. He was very disappointed to learn this. The structure was sound: it could now be considered an historical relic and, even at the eleventh hour, the Community Council should intervene to prevent its demolition. An appeal was made to the Chief Executive, Ronald Gilbert, who though on holiday at the time, sent a messenger to Twatt. No more exciting film had been shown in the Twatt cinema than this for the blasting holes had already been drilled and the charges implanted! The engineers were a little non-plussed when they were told that there was to be no 'big-bang'.

The chain of events which followed these rapidly taken decisions is remarkable. The writer visited the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Yeovilton in Somerset and told the then Director, Dennis White, what the local Community Council had done. Fortunately a personal friend of the Director, Captain Hank Rotherham just happened to be the first Commander of HMS Tern, Twatt. He lived in Canada but just happened to be coming over to Britain! Now aged 83, he was thrilled beyond belief to learn what was being done and immediately flew to Orkney to give the project his blessing. Hank Rotherham is an extraordinary character with countless valuable contracts in the Fleet Air Arm.

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He, more than anyone else, gave the whole project direction. Thanks to his publicity, letters, photographs and memorabilia poured in from all over the world to bring to life an important period in the history of Orkney of which there was no visual record. Three magnificent family albums were loaned to the writer in the hope that they would be of some use, one by a Twatt pilot and yet another by a Twatt Wren who, fortunately, was in the photographic section there. The Depute Director of the Yeovilton Fleet Air Arm Museum went on record to say that Orkney would be given everything it needed to establish a museum; everything but a World War 2 Fleet Air Arm aircraft! By good luck, what should turn up at the bottom of Kirkwall Bay but the aircraft needed!

The project took a new direction in the summer of 1988 when the RAF learned of the project. I was visited one day by 'Cyclops' Brown, a retired Air Commodore. He was a former Battle of Britain pilot and had been stationed at Skeabrae during the war. He had loved his stay in Orkney and offered me



a beautifully written, sensitive vignette of Orkney life during the war. He appealed for some consideration of the role of the RAF in the museum since the pilots at Twatt and Skeabrae worked closely together. He was disappointed to find nothing on Mainland Orkney to commemorate World War 2 and suggested that Twatt would be a fitting place for some locally commissioned sculpture. Later in that summer I had a telephone call from Ralph Faulkner from Evie who was in the Fleet Air Arm during the war. Ralph had made contact with a friend, Nicholas Horne, who was the official photographer at Skeabrae. Nicholas had a collection of material which he was about to burn but there were a few things relating to Orkney which might be of interest to the Fleet Air Arm museum.

An enormous batch of beautiful, priceless, photographs arrived covering war time scenes not only at

Skeabrae but also at Twatt. Nicholas had also been in charge of the Skeabrae Gramophone Club; he still had most of the records and even details of the concert programmes and these are now on the way back to Orkney. Like all my wartime contacts he was so pleased to offload something which he knew was to be permanently preserved.

Why am I interested in war I have been asked. I was born too young to remember much of it. About all I can recall is a walk down Binscarth Plantings with my sister Edna who told me her new boyfriend was a Fleet Air Arm officer called Ted Spredbury. She carved T.S.E.L. on a tree (where it can still be seen!). Many years later I joined the navy but one term at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth taught me that I would make a bad naval officer. I am a pacifist. As a teacher I avoided the subject of war for many years lest I was accused of glorifying it but my involvement in this project has completely changed my attitude to this study. For my school pupils an archaeology project came to life when we searched Hobbister's land (with permission naturally) with

metal detectors to find the site of a crashed aircraft. Imagine the triumph when we got our first positive reading and a child unearthed part of the aluminium frame of a Grumman! For me this has become living history - a bit like talking to old Orkney folks about their fieldnames or looking at the lists of old words they have jotted down for me. And is Twatt aerodrome any more military in concept than the Broch o' Gumess or the Martello Towers on Hoy? Is there any essential difference between the flint arrow heads I find on my land and the rounds of ammunition from a Blackburn Skua?

I am delighted to read that the Department of Planning has drawn up a development project for Twatt and that this has received the unanimous backing of the Orkney Islands Council. History will confirm that this was the right decision. And the decision to throw out the oil lamp?

Well that was quite wrong.

## Orkney :A Younger View

by Colin Kirkpatrick

I'm just a young fellow relatively recently returned to my homeland from a sustained 4 years period of further education. Like many of my compatriots I found the finer points and qualities of life in Orkney became more apparent and acute when compared to life "doon sooth" and indeed when just viewed from afar. The successive vacation trips home revealed aspects of Orkney's visual landscape and architecture hitherto taken somewhat for granted in a new light. Our eyes were slowly but surely enlightened by travel and experience, so that, often places that the memory had logged as just a turn in the street or a bit of the west-shore, became rather more special on renewed viewings.

I was glad to have such a place as my home. However, when coming home to stay it became quickly apparent that some of our elders didn't seem so sensitive to their homeland, with its often hidden and usually fragile atmospheres and character. We've already seen how quickly this inherent character and atmosphere can be diluted or even

sumptuous tea room/restaurant and craft shop.

Of course development is essential to Orkney's economic and social future, but surely careful consideration and planning is a must in order not to detract from our main asset; Orkney's unique atmosphere. This is of course obvious and goes without saying to a gradually growing number of people. However, as a young person living in Orkney I feel that there is a large portion of my generation unaware of the present importance of preserving and protecting their environment and its special character. Who can blame them with the present high handed manouvrings within our council and the modern pressures of making ends meet at the end of every week. It is easy to seem insignificant, helpless and without influence as a young person in today's Orkney. It's not surprising to find some young people apparently unconcerned about whether Orkney is concrete or dry stone. This is particularly sad with Orkney on the



eradicated by a piece of carelessly sited "development" or thoughtlessly placed, tourist orientated, sign-posts and accompanying booths, toilets, etc. Take for instance the "Punch and Judy" style ticket booth so unsuitably dropped right in front of Maeshowe. Hardly an enhancement of the monuments aesthetic exterior, however practical. In comparison who would think that the beautifully restored old mill just across the road housed

brink of increased development both in industry and tourism. After all, each generation is a temporary custodian of this planet, and surely Orkney's youth is Orkney's future. The young people of Orkney must be given the opportunity to become more aware of the need for conscientious protection of their heritage and shown that they can actually play an active role in doing this.

It is up to bodies like the OHS to recruit the vast

### The Late Alfie Taylor

The OHS lost a staunch supporter with the passing of Alfie Taylor last August.

Alfie returned to the Islands of his birth in the early 70's, as an itinerant teacher of art, and subsequently became teacher of pottery at Kirkwall Grammar School. More than one successful career owes much to his unstinted encouragement and support.

Alfie's love of the fine things in life encompassed the islands' architectural heritage and he readily battled to save it from insensitive treatment. The arts in general received his practical support. A wide circle at home and abroad will miss his loyal friendship and the provocative humour which enlivened every gathering he attended.

BSW

(from page 5)

untapped enthusiasm of young Orcadians. Well presented slide shows and talks are required at a school level where not only does the audience see exactly why the Heritage society does what it does, but also sees how they as people can and should become involved. As young enthusiastic and naive twelve year olds, my fellow Stromness BB's and I quickly realised the benefits of helping renovate a semi-derelict cottage at Rackwick and the tremendous amount of natural good fun to be had participating. Surely such experience should not be unique to our memories. Recruitment to the course can start at an even earlier stage with annual competitions in the Islands' primary schools, to design posters and the like. There really is a lot that can be done that isn't at present being done to the extent required. I would hope to have been wrong in saying that, but this is my and our experience as young (and not so young!) Orcadians.

Let's hope that this human resource can and will be pulled together to ensure both preservation and growth of our tremendous heritage.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Following on from my report last year, when I indicated that the society's main source of income, the occidental deed of covenant, had not been renewed, I am pleased to advise that the covenant has now been renewed for a further five years commencing in October 1989. This was indeed good news and the society is of course extremely grateful to occidental for their continuing support.

I also made mention in last year's report of the small grant provided by the Orkney Islands Council towards the archaeologist's salary. This matter has been taken up with the council, with a view to them taking over payment of the salary in full and the matter is now being discussed by the various council committees although it could be March 1989 before a reply is received. We therefore hope that the council will vote in favour of the society as we find it increasingly difficult to pay the archaeologist's salary.

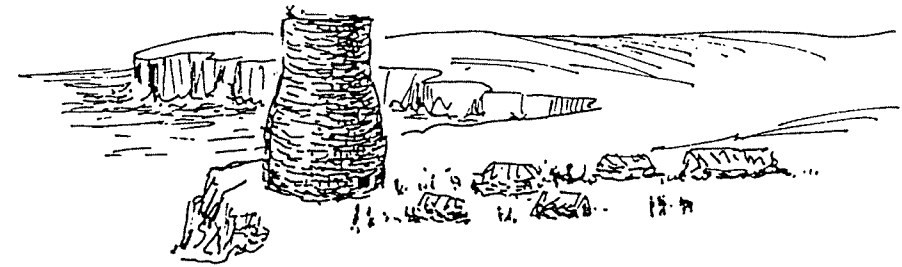
Finally, I would respectfully ask those of you who have not yet paid the annual subscription, £3, to complete the enclosed banker's order and return it to me. I thank you in anticipation of your assistance in this matter. - Brian Douglas



### PROPERTIES : Proposed alterations

- House at 1 Bridge Street, Kirkwall.
- 6 Palace Gardens, Kirkwall - Listed 'B' Bldg.
- Binscarth House, Finstown - Listed 'B' Bldg.
- 1 Cromwell Road, Kirkwall - Listed 'B' Group.
- Old Bank House, St. Margaret's Hope.
- Three Flats at 75 Victoria Street, Kirkwall.
- 7 Mounthoolie Lane, Kirkwall - Listed C/S .
- Two Flats at 51 Victoria Street, Kirkwall - Listed 'B' Building.
- 25 - 29 Bridge Street, Kirkwall - 2 Flats, a Restaurant and two shops.
- Extension to Butcher's Shop, 36 Albert Street, Kirkwall - Listed 'B' Building.
- Proposed change of use from Store to Coffee Shop at Boardhouse Mill, Birsay - Listed 'B' Building.
- Shop at 40 Albert Street, Kirkwall (D.E. Shop).

■ Plans from Planning Department



## RAYMOND LAMB OUTLINES NEW PICTURE OF

# Pictish and Viking Age Orkney

In past Newsletters I have reported mainly on the routine work of the office, on the Sites and Monuments recorded and related work such as tourist trails. It is easy to forget that while this is going on, our understanding of the early periods of Orkney history is growing and changing. I therefore have decided this time, to summarise the new picture of Pictish and Viking-Age Orkney which is now coming together. It is quite different from the old picture, and many parts of it need a lot more work. This is it in outline.

Through the second millennium B.C. there was a stable and well-ordered society in Orkney, which, after 1000 B.C. broke down catastrophically, in a way paralleled by the breakdown of Bronze Age societies in other parts of Europe and Asia. John Hedges, working from artefactual evidence, has proposed an immigration of new peoples about 700 B.C., and could well be right. By 600 B.C. the beginnings of the broch culture can be seen. In common with other Iron Age societies, this was a culture pervaded by warfare, dominated by warlords and their elite warbands, whose strongholds were the brochs, which reached their full developments at the beginning of the Christian era. Going into the early centuries A.D., warlords became chieftains, warbands became aristocracies, some chieftains emerged stronger than others, and the most successful eventually came out as incipient mediaeval kings.

By the seventh century A.D., a pattern of kingdoms covered Britain - the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of the Heptarchy in the south, and Strathclyde, Dalriada and Pictland in the north. Orkney possibly came near to emerging as a separate kingdom in its own right, but became gradually drawn into the powerful Pictish kingdom which by the end of the century had its centre on Tayside. Early in the eighth century, the Pictish kings achieved real control over Orkney, ruling through a local aristocracy whose power-bases were still the brochs, although these had a function more symbolic than militarily real, as society now was

prosperous, well-ordered and peaceable.

The eighth-century Pictish kingdom can fairly be called "Carolingian" - it shared in developing European mediaeval culture in which the institution of kingship was refined in a symbiosis with the Roman Church. In the early part of the century the cultural centre of this movement was Northumbria, with which Pictland was directly in contact, and the Pictish Church came to be dominated by a school of originally Northumbrian clerics led by St Egbert, a pupil of St Wilfrid and close friend of St Bede. St Egbert was also the instigator of the missions of St Willibrord and St Boniface who on the Continent worked in close relationship with the Frankish rulers in extending Christianity, and incidentally Frankish political power, into Frisia and Germany. The Pictish kings guided by Egbert, followed a remarkably parallel process in extending their own power alongside the institutions of the Roman Church, into Orkney.

In the second half of the eighth century, the Pictish kingdom was at its height of power, dominating Northern Britain in the same way that King Offa's Mercia dominated the south. Both kingdoms would have looked for their models to the Continent, where Charlemagne was consolidating his Frankish empire. Orkney by now had its own bishop, whose seat was at St Boniface's Church in Papay, a centre chosen for its easy communication with Shetland, where both the church and the Pictish king were still pursuing their expansionist ambitions. Orkney now had a cultured Pictish aristocracy ruling in parallel with a system of Church organisation which very effectively covered and pervaded the countryside. The clergy - the papar - were in typical Carolingian fashion, granted rich estates, which are commemorated by such place-names as Papi, Paplay, and Papa. On to this comfortable and well-ordered early mediaeval society, around 800, the first Viking raiders rudely irrupted.

The ninth century was a time when the dominant kingship of the eighth century, whose power-bases were in reality flimsier than they had appeared, went to pieces. Charlemagne's unified empire did not survive his death, while England after the death of Offa entered a period of fragmentation, exacerbated by Danish incursions, until it was re-consolidated under Wessex by Alfred. The Pictish kingdom survived, probably because there was no immediate challenge; when the challenge came, in the person of Kenneth MacAlpin in 843, collapse was immediate. By 800 the Pictish administration in Orkney had to cope with Viking raids - raids by individual pirate war-crews which were not concerted enough to constitute a threat of direct conquest, but which seriously disrupted economic life and undermined the prestige of the Pictish aristocracy, whose lack of naval power made them helpless to organise defence. The administration respond in the same way that the prosperous communities of late fourth-century Roman Britain responded to the raids by the Saxons - it recruited some of the pirate crews as mercenaries and settled them on estates in return for military services. This new Norse military elite took over the social position of the old Pictish aristocracy. They were, of course, working within, and gradually taking over, an existing administrative system in which the Church plays a key role. As members of Norse war-crews married local girls, they adopted Christianity.

By 843 the Norse were sufficiently in control to preclude any attempt by the Scottish kingdom, as successor to the kingdom of the Picts, to enforce any claim over Orkney. During the second half of the ninth century, as a part of a deliberate campaign to undermine Pictish cultural institutions, the Scottish kings largely dismantled the intensely hierarchical power - structures of the Roman Church, which they correctly perceived as an instrument of the Pictish kings and still dangerously loyal to the Pictish dynasty. The Church still operating in Orkney thus found its essential contacts in the old heartland cut off, and its prestige undermined. The Norse ruling class discovered that they could manage without it. Around 900, the Orkney bishopric ended, while the emerging kingdom of Norway came to take an interest in Orkney affairs. Within this context the rule of the jarls began.

Although the higher levels of Church government had been dismantled, most of the population



From Page 8

remained Christian. The condition was now right for a pagan reaction at the top level of Norse society. So pervasive had been the Carolingian idea of the rule of the king on earth reflecting the rule of God, that the early jarls found themselves developing a cult which reflected their own social position and ideas. Thus developed the cult of Odin as All-father, supreme warlord, head of the ultimate war-band, whose intensely epic-heroic and exclusively aristocratic ideals show development far from the origins of the Odin cult in an old tribal shamanism. The rich pagan graves, such as those at Westness, belong to this pagan revival of the late ninth to early tenth centuries. The line of Odinist jarls culminated in the death of Sigurd the Stout at Clontarf in 1014.

The pagan jarldom was a period of isolation from the European cultural mainstream; the contemporary Scottish kingdom was correspondingly inward-looking. The Pictish kingdom had drawn cultural vigour from its relations with Northumbria, for a time the greatest centre of scholarship and thought in north-western Europe. As the cultural centre moved south, first to Lichfield and eventually to Winchester, Northern Britain was marginalised. In the eleventh century it began to move back into the mainstream. In Orkney this development began with Thorfinn the Mighty, a man of Scottish, Christian upbringing who began to put back in place the institutions of mediaeval ecclesiastical and secular government, a process completed a century later under Rogivald.

## Eynhallow

### Suggested Sale by O.I.C

O.H.S objects to such a proposal. In private hands no guarantee could be assured that the historical sites would be protected. The thirty year ongoing study of the fulmar colony, the folklore and history can only be preserved while in the ownership of the county.

## The late Mary Bain

Mary Bain, who died on May 14th, 1988, was Vice-Chairman of Orkney Heritage Society. She was a founder member of the Society and invaluable for her capacious knowledge of families, buildings, and events in and around Kirkwall and, indeed, throughout the West Mainland. As teacher of domestic science in the Grammar School she is remembered with affection by countless pupils, and she claimed close acquaintance with Kirkwall's streets, alleys, buildings domestic and public, from the days when she helped to deliver milk from her family's dairy business.

The words "keen", "enthusiastic", "affectionate" are scattered throughout Bill Hewison's tribute in The Orcadian. A contemporary at Kirkwall Grammar School, he recalls that Mary was sports champion at school.

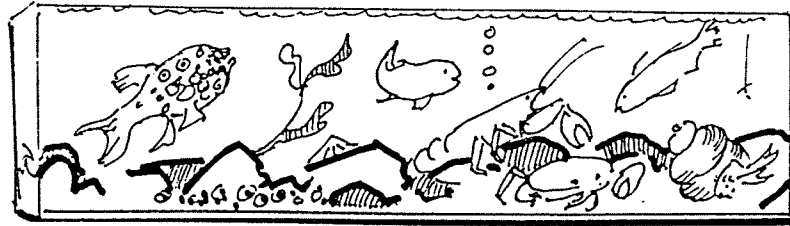
Mr Hewison continues:

"She had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Orkney springing from her intense love of the islands and her travels round them and this she put to good use in the Heritage Society of which she was Vice-Chairman, the Field Club for whom she organised guided walks round Kirkwall, and the Countryside Committee. She fought fiercely and well for what she considered good in our environment and denounced any unjustifiable erosion of our heritage with vigour. In particular she regarded St Magnus Cathedral as the centre of Orkney's culture, not just historical and architectural but spiritual, so it is not surprising that she was an enthusiastic member of the Congregation Board as well as of the "Friends of St Magnus." Mary Bain was indeed "a happy person full of vitality and enthusiasm." We mourn her passing but rejoice in happy memories.

M.L.

Don't forget  
Environment Week  
22nd April - 1st May

# New Sea Life Centre



*Sarah Johnstone describes her new venture in Stromness;*

This year is to see the start of a new venture in Stromness - The Sea Life Centre. Orkney has an abundance of Marine Life seldom seen by the majority of people living or visiting here and the Sea Life Centre hopes to bring some of the underwater world to those unable to experience it first hand.

Salt water aquaria will host a variety of marine life which can be found in Orkney waters and a "touch pool", as the name suggests will allow handling of the more tolerable species. A collection of photographs both past and present showing various uses we put the sea to will be on display in the centre and an information service for all related activities (diving, fishing and water sports) will be provided.

Walks and talks will be run for educational clubs and societies and it is hoped the centre will be well patronised by the schools in the area.

Thus it is hoped to arouse in the public, both tourist and local, appreciation of yet another aspect of Orkney's rich heritage.

## TOM KENT - Pier Arts Centre

How refreshing to see a photographer's work that approaches such a diversity of subject with equal skill and lack of sentimentality. His care and simplicity of approach produce images of strength and quality which remain a dynamic force within the mind.

Rural Orkney life, as portrayed by Tom Kent, is just "there", something happening around him, which can serve just as adequately as a car or a petrol pump, or a man having his "piece" in the forge; as a vehicle for his pictorial sense.

For me, many of these images have a dynamic strength which comes from their looking so "posed" so "stage-set". But when you look closely you can never be sure - Tom Kent's ability to see these fleeting moments of grace and simplicity in every-day life gives them a vibrancy seldom found - but, then again, are they "posed", "stage-set"? You can't be sure. I don't know and it doesn't really matter because they work!

He carefully considers his subject; uses the whole image area - as in Packing dried fish" or "Using a quernstone" or gives a quality of stark gravity, as in "Kitchener's coffin". I was disappointed at the choice of images in the long gallery. I felt it was trying to show too many sides of such a diverse image-maker. A personal view of Tom Kent's work would have been more successful.

R.W.

## Secretary's Report

Two significant events in 1988 were the outing to Eynhallow and the renewal by Occidental Consortium of the vital covenant which keeps archaeology alive and well in Orkney.

The Ferry boat "Eynhallow" was fully booked on June 4th. 90 passengers crossed over from Tingwall in the kind of weather we now (almost) take for granted on such occasions. Skilfully navigated by the skipper, Ian Flaws, the new boat is ideal for landing on sloping shingle. Miraculously the island absorbed the "trippers" with benign accommodation. In groups of two, three or half-a-dozen they wandered in all directions. The ruined chapel and foundations of the monastery attracted the majority. Dr Lamb, our guide and mentor, challenged some received wisdom as to the origin of the incumbent monks, but none could dispute the sanctity of the island.

It is with profound gratitude that we record the renewal of OXY's covenant, guaranteed for five years. There may be changes in the allocation of this revenue - £6000.00 (plus interest reclaimed). The matter is under review.

St Magnus Festival: The Society sponsored the production of a tribute to Orkney's poet George Mackay Brown with a small contribution towards expenses. The programme, GMB - A Celebration, was devised by Archie Bevan (Chairman of our Society 1973-76) and produced by the Society's present secretary. The BBC recorded the performance which was broadcast in October. The Minister for the Arts, the Right Hon. Richard Luce, and his wife attended and were most appreciative. N.B. Souvenir programmes are still available. The cover design is by David Grieve who was also one of the poetry readers. (Apply M Linklater 20 Main Street, Kirkwall).

Visit of HBMD: Those mysterious letters are explained in the 1987 Newsletter and stand for Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate. Our president, Lady Grimond, is on the Board presumably directing the Directorate. The social event in the Kirkwall Hotel gave our Chairman an opportunity to discuss the renovation of the Hall of Clestrain with the Directorate's architect, James Simpson, (Simpson & Brown, Architects, Edinburgh.) who expressed keen interest in the building and offered useful advice.

A new idea for the use of this elegant early 18th century mansion has been suggested by Sandy Firth (OHS Vice-Chairman). He envisages a Norwegian Study Centre along the lines of the proposal by archaeologists from Bergen University. This was in connection with Westness in Rousay when Westness House was on the market. Here is an alternative and Sandy has written accordingly to Dr Sigrid Kaland of Bergen University.

Museums Conference: 4th - 6th September. The society supplied transport and also coffee/biscuits in the Town Hall thus acting as hosts on an occasion organised by Anne Brundle of Tankerness House Museum which had organised this successful and useful conference.

The Director of Planning, OIC, T.W. Eggeling gave an illuminating talk on Council policy and achievements to a public meeting in the Kirkwall Town Hall on 17th November 1988. We are on good terms with the Planning Department and receive plans for comment on buildings within conservation areas.

Fereday Prize 1988 went to Hazel Wrigley of Kirkwall Grammar School with a project on the Island of Swona. In fact all three prizes this year were won by South Ronaldsay pupils. Sally Ann Smales consulted the Annal Family for a project on the Island of Swona and won second prize, while Ingrid Omand chose "Houses of Hoxa", recording past and present families still living where their forebears lived and died.

And there is the on-going saga of the BP oil-tanks in Kirkwall. "Delicate negotiations are underway" which means the mighty oil company is attempting to strike a hard bargain.

Orkney Countryside Committee: Alastair Tulloch keeps us informed of the subjects receiving attention by regularly giving copies of Minutes to the OHS. These include quite a few which also appear on the Agenda of the Heritage Society such as St Boniface Church and the Eday Heritage Trail (reference to damage). Marine Fish Farms and Amenity Trusts are matters which have not come before the Heritage Society but they certainly come within our sphere of interest as do many other items referred to in the Minutes of the Countryside Committee.

Look out for advance notice of another Eynhallow expedition early in June. First event in 1989 was Bryce Wilson's illustrated talk on his visit to Canada last year - 23rd February.

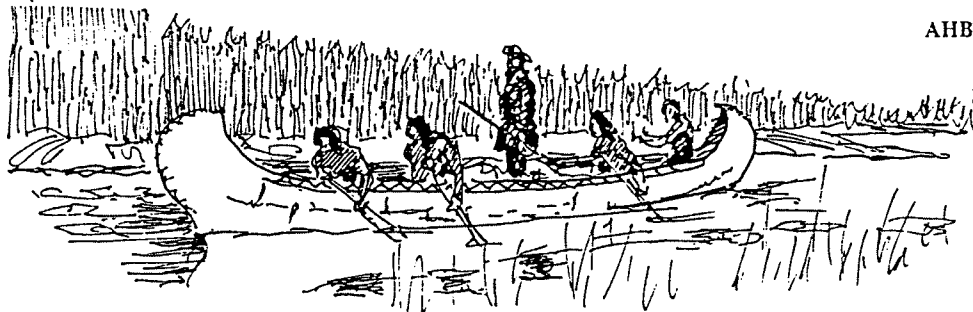
Marjorie Linklater

Review

## Out of Hudson's Bay

Over fifty people defied the weather and the competing attraction of the Drama Festival to hear Bryce Wilson give a totally absorbing account of the Hudson's Bay Company. Illustrating his lecture with a fascinating collection of slides, Bryce told the history of the company from its beginning right up to (or down to) its presently sadly diminished status as a glorified chain store. He dealt at some length with the vital part played by Orkneymen, including such celebrated figures as the Isbister family, William Tomison, and the great John Rae.

Members who missed this notable event will have a second chance, this time in Stromness during the Folk Festival in May.



AHB

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# Gravestones in Orphir

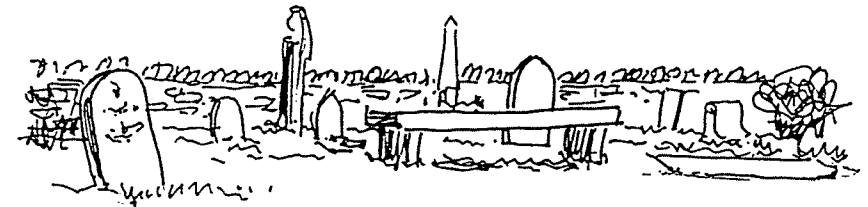
by Daphne Lorimer

The Orphir Kirkyard Survey commenced operations on the 21 May last year using sample recording sheets. Owing to delay in printing the final sheets and cards, recording did not begin in earnest until 6 July. Twenty official sessions were held but, after a few weeks, the box of equipment was left with Mrs Corrine Stevenson at the adjacent Bu'farm and she and one or two other enthusiasts finished off a row or a section in their own time.

The project is a popular one locally and has engendered a great deal of interest. The team are very keen and mastered the art of recording very quickly.

Registrar, as they predated her records.

The group is fortunate in having, as members, two local people who are well versed in the ramifications of the local families. It has added to the interest and understanding of the survey and it is hoped to record the information. The Archivist provided the group with copies of early census returns and registers which have been very helpful in deciphering some of the more difficult gravestones. It has been interesting to note the change in



Not everyone turned up every time, but the group usually consisted of 6 or 7 and could go as high as 10.

Recording began in the first extension as these graves were relatively new and easy to read. It enabled the beginners to learn the technique without too many problems. The old section of the kirkyard, on the other hand, posed many more problems: a large number of the gravestones were horizontal, buried under the turf and had to be disinterred. The turf had the merit of preserving the lettering but where, for example, the centre had been exposed to the elements, the lettering was eroded and it took all the skill and ingenuity of all the group to decipher the inscription. These gravestones went back to the latter part of the eighteenth century and were of great interest to Mrs Stevenson, the Orphir

sumames (i.e. the movement of families) and the fashions in Christian names. The tracing of itinerant masons has not been so successful - very few left their marks!

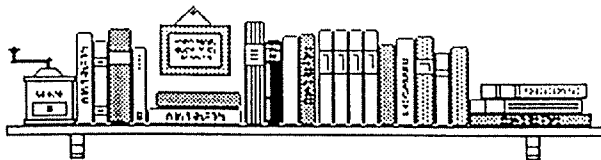
Miss Bacon has undertaken the mammoth task of transferring the information from the recording sheets to index cards. A start has been made on photographing the stones but does present problems. Recording of the old part of the cemetery was brought to a halt by the deterioration in the weather but the level of, approximately, the Round Church was reached and approximately 340 graves have been recorded.

Finally, the group provided an added attraction to Tour visitors to the Round Kirk and many was the inquisitive American dragged reluctantly back to his coach.

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## Book Review



Members of OHS and other people in Orkney will enjoy reading "Pigeon Holes of Memory, The Life and Times of Dr. John Mackenzie", (Constable) £20, edited by his Grand-daughter Christina Byam Shaw.

Although the largest part of Dr. John's long life was spent in the Highlands, he was born and lived in crofting and fishing communities where conditions did not differ profoundly from those of 19th century Orkney. First a doctor, he has much to tell of medical training in Edinburgh in the days of Burke and Hare, ("wonderfully horrid work!"), of medical practice when it consisted mainly of purges and bleeding, and of life as an Army doctor when discipline was maintained by purges and flogging, both activities requiring the attendance of a medical man. Small wonder that he escaped as soon as the opportunity arose to become farmer and factor at Kinellan.

Dr. John was a brilliant raconteur

and there is not a dull page in the book, partly because he was so emphatically not a dull man, but also because he was a man before his time. In everything he touched his instinct was to improve, an instinct often frustrated. His longest and greatest struggles were directed towards improving the agricultural methods of the crofters of Gairloch where he was factor during his nephew's minority, and it was in order to see the progressive systems in Orkney that he visited Shapinsay in 1856, of which an interesting account is given. "I was astonished in Orkney by the great population - so utterly unceltic, such diligent workers on land". Agriculture was however only one of Dr. John's interests. As a Commissioner in Lunacy he did much for the care of what were then known as lunatics and pursued his interest in this subject and in penal institutions when he took his wife and two of their daughters to France where he did not scruple to write to the Emperor

telling him of the appalling conditions in the St. Lazaire prison for women, tho' other prisons in France and Italy were more enlightened than our own. On to Rome where the Mackenzies saw the Pope and enjoyed the delights of Roman society tho' not of Roman fleas.

Back at home again he was obliged to leave Gairloch on his nephew's majority and went to live in Inverness where he became a Town Councillor and spent 6 years as Provost, another frustrating experience. His colleagues didn't share his interest in public health and housing, they refused to fight with him in the last ditch against the refusal of the Caledonian Canal Commissioners to accept liability for flooding Inverness in the past, nor in providing for works to prevent it in the future.

Undoubtedly Dr. John was an iconoclast and

many of his opinions were out of step with his time. He had always believed in the equality of women

and, though a laird's son, came to oppose blood sports, but undoubtedly what gave the greatest pain to the worthies of Inverness Town Council was his embracing teetotalism at the end of his life and his insistence on drinking water at Council dinners. Nonetheless they loved and admired him as all must do who read this remarkable book, as much a masterpiece of Mrs. Byam Shaw as of her grandfather. Without her dedication in piecing together his notes we would not have had it, and without her researches we would not have had the notes which are quite as interesting as the text; written with an elegance and lucidity that make a perfect contrast to Dr. John's inimitably racy style.

It is a much more interesting book than "A hundred years in the highlands" by nephew Osgood Mackenzie - If £20 is more than your budget will allow, insist on the library getting you "Pigeon Holes of Memory".

Laura Grimond

## Orkney BOOKS 1988

St Magnus Cathedral and Orkney's Twelfth Century Renaissance edited by Barbara Crawford  
Aberdeen University Press £12.50 till end of February then £16.95

Shoal and Sheaf Orkney's pictorial heritage David M A Tinch The Orkney Library £12.50

Four Poets for St Magnus limited edition by Breckness Press

A Pot of Island Broth Jack Cooper The Orkney View £5.25

Old Orkney Trades edited by Sheila Spence The Orkney Press £8.95

To Step Among Wrack Fiona MacInnes The Orkney Press £3.95

Orkney Wordbook Gregor Lamb Byrgisey £14.50

Tiny Chaos New creative writing from Orkney and Shetland £1.00

Harray Orkney's Inland Parish reprint by J T Firth Rendall Stromness £1.35

Fae Abune th'Hill Norman Baldwin (1987) The Orkney View £4.25

Orkney Golf Club Centenary 1889-1989 The Orcadian £3.00

Sheldra A child in Neolithic Orkney T Woodgridge TRAHS £4.50

Magnus in Orkney a colouring book for peedie folk Orkney Preschool Play Association £1.50

The Ancient Monuments of Orkney new edition by Anna and Graham Ritchie HMSO £1.50

Shipwrecks of Orkney, Shetland and Pentland Firth David M Ferguson David and Charles £9.95

Portrait of Orkney new edition by George Mackay Brown John Murray £6.95

### Books mentioning Orkney

Brochs of Scotland J N G Ritchie Shire Archaeology £2.50

Scotland BC Anna Ritchie HMSO £3.95

Frozen in Time The fate of the Frankin Expediton Beattie & Geiger Grafton £4.99

Glimmer of Cold Brine A Scottish sea anthology Aberdeen University Press £8.95

Company of Adventurers The story of the Hudson's Bay Company, Percy C Newman Penguin £5.95

## Readers' Notes

Contact us and make your ideas Orkney Heritage Society's business.



**Congratulations!** Marjorie on your 80th

and best wishes from all of us.