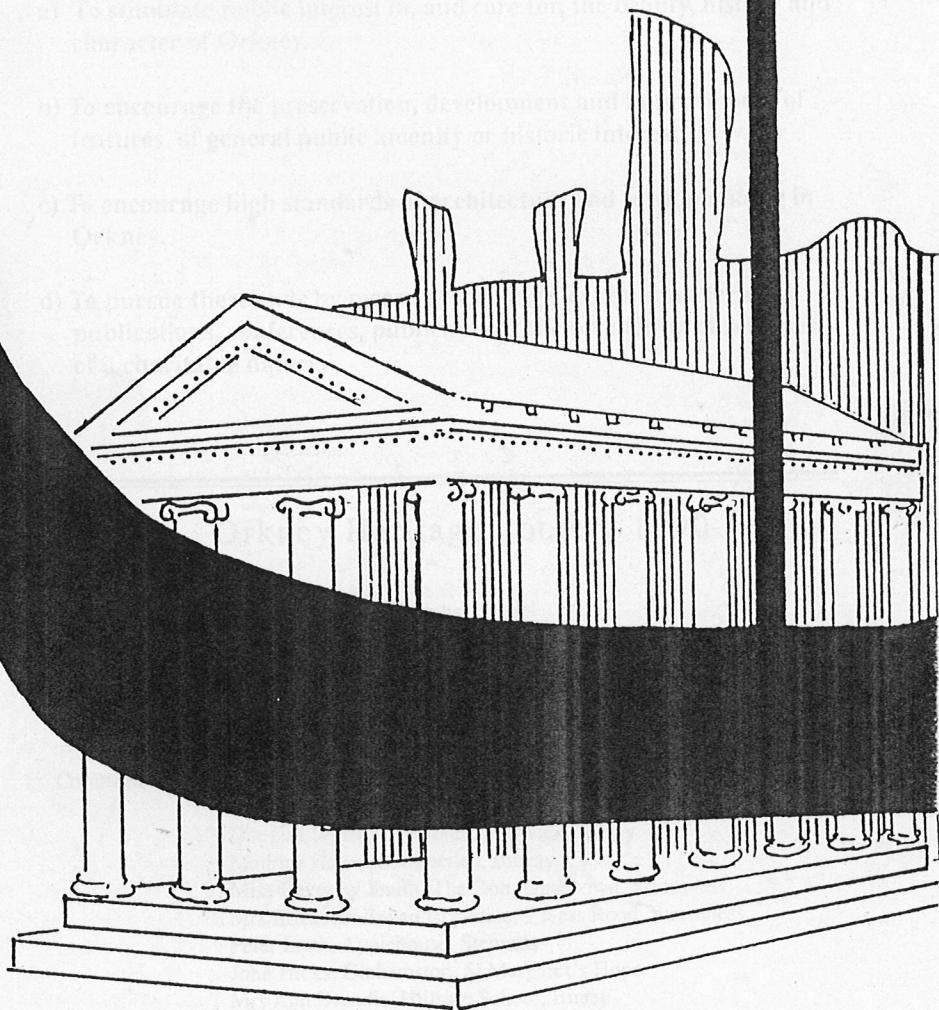
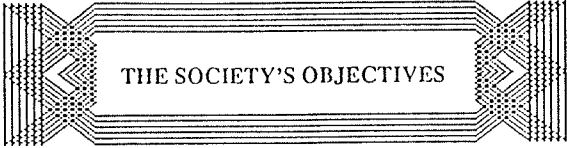


ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER 1990



THE SOCIETY'S OBJECTIVES

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.

Orkney Heritage Society 1990

President:	Lady Grimond, Old Manse, Firth
Chairman:	Iain Heddle, Mill of Eyrlund, Stenness
Vice-Chairman:	Alexander Firth, Edan, Berstane Road, Kirkwall
Secretaries:	Miss Andi Ross, Outerdykes, Stenness Mrs Mona Sinclair, Skaranness, 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 Douglas Welsh, Linnabrek, Marwick, Birsay Maurice Hayes, Summerlea, Burray Miss Beverley Smith, The Don, Outertown, Stromness Mrs Elizabeth Bevan, Hopedale, 9 Ness Road, Stromness Peter Leith, Appiehouse, Stenness John Hicks, Grahamston, St Margaret's Hope Mrs Ann Brundle, Hillside School, Birsay Mrs Daphne Lorimer, Scorradale, Orphir Mrs Inga Oag, Innisfield, off Palace Road, Kirkwall

EDITORIAL

That archaeology is fated to have a relationship with tourism and produce offsprings of doubtful legitimacy like the Viking entertainment in York is, we suppose, an embarrassment the discipline cannot escape. If the purpose of archaeology is to increase the corporate "oohs" and "aahs" of the tourist invasion then our resident archaeologist might be profitably employed serving ice creams to the individuals who form the crocodiles moving, sometimes with indecent haste, through Maeshowe and Skarabrae.

But our archaeologist has a sterner purpose. Like the late Gordon Childe he is concerned not only to find out what happened in history but to get people thinking about what we ought to be learning from past experience.

"Orkney in Western Civilization" Dr Lamb's contribution, is an important article deserving close study. We would commend it to those who would turn Kirkwall into a city where traffic density becomes a measure of economic success; and to those who would turn Scapa Flow into an expanse of water dedicated to leisure pursuits and to the oil which fuels motorised traffic.

Desertification, to borrow Dr Lamb's chilling term, is already well advanced in the Flow and very likely in the North Sea. He writes, "medieval social systems are characterised by efficient development of local resources, within what essentially were local, closed cycles, a pattern of life which was ecologically sustainable in a way that the heavily urbanised civilizations of the Ancient World were not." We may not be able to return to such a closed cycle economy but no amount of hi-tech fixes will save us from the fate of ancient civilizations if we fail to learn from their mistakes.

From your Chairman

It was with great pleasure that I heard of "The Scotsman" announcing that the first David Steven Award is to be given to Mr Edwin Harrold for creating the woodland at Happy Valley, Stenness.....Just stop and think for a moment. It took him 40 years to grow the shrubs and trees around his cottage, but it would only take an hour with modern machinery, to destroy the whole area.

Isn't this just the example for us to keep in mind? Isn't it what the Heritage Society is here for? We must do our best to prevent fine things, which took years to produce, or which have been valued for centuries, from being destroyed by people who put beauty at the bottom of their priorities.

A major step forward has been taken with the formation of the Orkney Historic Buildings Trust, which, although quite separate from the Heritage Society, has the aim of actually saving and preserving some of the old and finest of Orkney's buildings. Our President began the creation of the Trust, on which she now serves as one of the Trustees, under the chairmanship of Brigadier Malcolm Dennison, (and now your chairman has been persuaded to join). Several possible buildings are the subject of the Trust's interest and the Hall of Clestrain is among them.

Heritage Society members may have seen the letter to the *Orcadian* from our President, Vice-President and myself, regarding recognition by the Society of birthplaces, homes, etc. of Orcadians famous in history. The situation is not yet quite clear as to when this may be possible, but it is conceivable that at our next AGM we may be able to ask for general approval of the principle. At our last AGM Marjorie Linklater resigned as Secretary to the Society. We have been deeply indebted to her for her keen eyes and ears, and we are very lucky to have Andi Ross to replace her in this important job. After much interest taken by the Society, over many years and some recent help, the old house opposite the foot of Hellihole, Stromness is now again a joy to behold instead of being an ugly eyesore, derelict and neglected for the last 40 or so years. Fiona and Neil Matheson are to be congratulated on the transformation.

Ian Magnus Heddle

Secretary's Report

FROM YOUR NEW SECRETARY Andi Ross May 1990.

Trying to make something palatable out of the year's committee minutes is terrible work, and will probably make for very dry reading; I can only apologise before hand.

I must first start by wishing Marjorie Linklater well. I know she has been as busy as ever and it would be difficult indeed to imagine her in retirement. I would also like to thank her for the kind and helpful assistance she has given to me in these early days of my association with the Society.

From the minutes it would seem that environmental matters occur regularly and often the same items reappear time and again. This, to a certain extent is to be understood, as environmental problems are by nature long term in their resolution. This time of course can be made longer than necessary when there is a lack of political will on the side of those in a position to actually do something.

This year started with the Civic Trust asking the Society what plans they have for litter control; the Society believed that a concerted effort would have to be mounted by the Local Authority.

Litter of all kinds, beach pollution included, is a big problem in Orkney. Shetland has tackled this problem head on; they have appointed a person whose sole responsibility it is to devise campaigns not only targeting litter and refuse clearance, but public awareness too. They have acknowledged that some litter emanates from visiting ships, in harbour and at anchor. Shetland provide these ships with refuse skips, and put extra ones on the harbour. This is to my mind precisely the type of action we need in Orkney, and I hope that the Heritage Society will act in concert with other local organisations toward this end.

To the Council's credit, this year they have donated £300 towards the poster advertising a beach cleaning day at Scapa. This is being organised as "Operation Bright Water", by Scottish Conservation Projects, based at Doune. The big day is to be June 24th and if anybody is interested they may find out more about it from either, Ross Andrew on Kirkwall 2879 or Evie 275; or Gail Churchill, SCP, Doune, Tel 0786 841080.

A further reoccurring point is the Society's use of recycled paper. I am pleased to say that our first batch of 100% recycled, headed letter paper arrived just a few weeks ago. I should like to see the Society encouraging other organisations which we use, such as the VSO for photocopying, to switch to recycled paper.

A big event in the Heritage Society this year was the announcement by Laura Grimond of the Orkney Historic Buildings Trust. The idea behind this is for houses of historical interest in Orkney, with the agreement of their owners, to be restored and then sold, the proceeds to be shared between the Trust and the previous owners; the Trust's share would go into restoring the next property. The Heritage Society donated £50 toward the £250 legal fee needed to start up the Trust.

The Society had also been vocal in opposing the proposed sale of Eynhallow Island by the Council. After much pressure from a number of local groups the sale had not gone ahead.

Secretary's Report continued

If I may now simply draw on Marjorie's report to the 1989 AGM, the events of the year will appear in a nutshell:-

During the year there were five Committee meetings, also a talk by Dr Anna Ritchie and Dr Colin Renfrew. In November the Orkney Islands Council Director of Planning, Mr Tom Eggeling, gave a talk on the planning concept in Orkney which was informative and useful. It is good to record our amicable relations with the Planning Department.

The Museum's Officer, Mr Bryce Wilson, who visited Canada in 1988 gave a most interesting talk on the Hudson Bay Co.

At this time preparation for the commemoration of the Bi-centenary of the Bounty Voyage was under way, and as an Orcadian was aboard the original voyage the Orkney Heritage Society contributed £100 towards the passage of an Orcadian, sailing in May on a replica of the Bounty.

In the St Magnus Festival the Orkney Heritage Society, for our annual contribution towards the Festival, sponsored the two professional musicians who appeared in the Johnsmas Foy, a miscellany of Orkney prose, poetry and music, Mrs Linklater's last production of the event.

The Eynhallow Trip on the evening of 3rd June went off very successfully, slightly marred by attacking skuas, but our grateful thanks to Miss Beverley Smith and Dr Lamb and also Mr Firth, our organiser.

Mrs Linklater spoke of the Civic Trust Conference; she was our delegate at this meeting. It was extremely interesting, having personal contact with other similar Society and Authority representatives. The subjects were very relevant, and Mrs Linklater will write an article in our 1990 Newsletter. The theme of the Conference was the environment. The Secretary is hopeful there will be a seminar on environment with the Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles taking part, all of whom have similar problems.

On the subject of the Gravestones in Orphir Churchyard Mrs Linklater asked Mrs Lorimer to report. Mrs Lorimer gave an up-date on the survey and recording which is nearing completion. Only a half day's work is required to complete the recording, then Mr Heddle is to undertake the photography. Mrs Lorimer hopes to have an exhibition when it has been completed, possibly in the Community Centre. Mrs Lorimer stated that she had also been asked by Mr Gordon Wright, the Publisher, to put forward the owner of Happy Valley in Stenness for the David Stephen Award. Radio Orkney has a tape recorder at Happy Valley and Gordon Wright has a video of it.

The Secretary mentioned Witta Quarry which was turned down by the Council before we had a chance to discuss it.

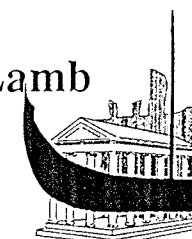
The Fereday Prize has been awarded. Details will be in our first Committee Meeting.

Due to the lack of space we have had to omit the Civic Trust report - anyone interested can have a copy from the Secretary

Orkney in Western Civilisation



by Raymond Lamb



Orkney's position is a rather special one on the fringe of what anciently was the world of high civilisation. The Roman Empire in the West - Italy, Spain, Gaul and Britain - during the fifth century broke up into a number of kingdoms established by barbarian invaders with familiar names such as Goths, Visigoths and Anglo-Saxons. The rough war-leaders of these tribal ward-bands called themselves kings, and tried to adopt the institutions and trappings of the high civilisation which they had displaced. However they were not notably successful in doing so - by the seventh century Europe was in a "dark age" from which the civilisation we know as mediaeval Christendom emerged by painfully slow stages. In the East however - Greece and the eastern Mediterranean - the Roman Empire survived to become the Byzantine Empire, although a large part of this subsequently was overtaken by the rise of Islam and the dramatic conquests of the Umayyad caliphs.

Why did the Western Empire fall and why did its institutions not survive as they did in the East? For fifty years from the 1930s into the 1980s there has been a standard explanation, based on the ideas of the great Belgian historian Henri Pirenne. Pirenne ascribed the decline of the West to the seventh-century rise of Islam. The framework of trade which had sustained the Roman Empire essentially continued, but it was cut off by the Arab conquest of the Mediterranean as far west as Spain. Europe north of the Pyrenees and the Alps thus was isolated from the Mediterranean and had to develop its own distinctive culture, of which the first great landmark was Charlemagne's Frankish empire of the latter half

of the eighth century.

Pirenne's thesis fitted the perceived facts, but the period between 400 and 800 in Europe is one for which historical records are very scarce, and Pirenne lived too early to have the benefit of the biggest potential source of information, field and archaeology. Within the past decade archaeology has shown that the true picture is very different.

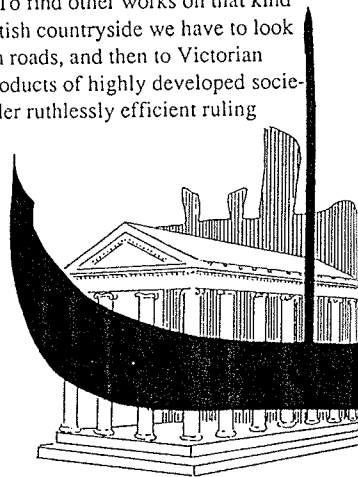
The Roman Empire, like the Mediterranean and Near Eastern civilisations before it, was urban-based; its fundamental unit was the city-state, and the countryside was there to feed the urban masses and generate revenues for an urban-based landowning class. There also was a huge professional army to be kept supplied with grain, meat and leather. This was a classic recipe for environmental degradation; the relationship between the social system and the land was one of exploitation. The city of Rome grew to a population level of a million, a staggering figure by the standards of the pre-Industrial world, one has only to imagine the enormity of supplying a city three times the size of Edinburgh with everyday foods, without the benefit of railways. Steep valley-sides within reach of cities were built up with terraces to maximise production, but for bulk grain the ultimate dependence was on huge slave-worked estates in North Africa. By the second century there are signs of overstrain, and from then on, the rural areas of Italy and Gaul suffered accelerating economic recession. As the land with the highest production costs was abandoned, terraces fell into ruin and soil was released into rivers, resulting in alluvial choking and downstream flooding. We can now recognise that this flooding was not a cause of the decline of Rome - the climate did not get any wetter - it was a consequence of her social and economic

breakdown. The Visigothic conquest of North Africa cut off Rome's corn supply, but by that time - the fifth century - the exploitative system had already set going the processes of desertification. American prairie wheat-farming in the twentieth century is an obvious and frightening parallel.

It is a fact that Britain, the most remote province of Empire and the one in which the way of life remained more native than Roman, did not suffer the agricultural decline, and it is also notable that it was on and beyond the northern fringes of the Empire that western mediaeval civilisation developed. Where life remained essentially rural, with few and small towns, environmental degradation was absent. Mediaeval social systems are characterised by efficient development of local resources, within what essentially were local, closed cycles, a pattern of life which was ecologically sustainable in a way that the heavily urbanised civilisations of the Ancient World were not. In the eastern Mediterranean, the economic order, although degraded, survived to support the Byzantine empire and the Caliphate, which were the true inheritors of Graeco-Roman civilisation. In the west, the economic basis was gone, and a wholly new order had to emerge. The economic beginnings of this order, a trading-network centred on the North Sea and largely independent of the Mediterranean, can be discerned as early as the second century. It was fostered by the Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon kings, and still more developed by the Vikings.

With this perspective we can see why Orkney flourished in the early Middle Ages. It was a rich and vigorous region outside the borders of the old Roman Empire and therefore untrammelled by the internal problems which the empire had suffered. By the eighth century it was part of a strong Pictish kingdom which was ruled and administered on much the same lines as Charlemagne's Frankish empire. [Charlemagne's economic system paved the way for the Viking maritime expansion, which gave Orkney a central place between the North Sea and the new colonies of the Atlantic.]

Orkney was part of that Northern world which did not suffer the environmental degradation of the western Roman Empire, and so was able to contribute to the building of mediaeval civilisation. However we can discern the traces of a socially catastrophic environmental breakdown, almost certainly socially-induced, at least a thousand years earlier, between about 1000 and 700 BC in the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Bronze Age societies throughout Europe were highly organised with land being carefully apportioned and its use and production controlled. We see impressive traces of this high organisation in the massive linear earthworks known as *tred dykes*, good examples of which survive in Papay and North Ronaldsay. The Muckle Gairsty, one of two which crosses North Ronaldsay, survives in places to a height of nearly two metres and a breadth of fourteen metres. To find other works on that kind of scale in the British countryside we have to look forward to Roman roads, and then to Victorian railways - both products of highly developed societies organised under ruthlessly efficient ruling classes.



Another manifestation of the ordering of the Bronze Age landscape is the "sub-peat dykes" - the foundations of massively-constructed walls which run for long distances across the hills of Eday and parts of Birsay and Hoy - in Shetland they are ubiquitous. They are probably widespread, but can be seen today only in a few places where the thick covering of peat has been removed or denuded. To call these dykes "field boundaries" is misleading - they are something much more substantial, and indicate a ruthless ordering of the agricultural countryside, which in the second millennium BC was considerably more extensive than today.

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Between 1000 and 700 BC there was an environmental catastrophe after which much of the higher land was abandoned to the newly fast-growing peat.

From the Bronze Age into the Iron Age the climate did get cooler and wetter, and the old view took this to account for the abandonment of the more marginal farmlands. The climate change however was not such that agriculture could not have adapted it. Throughout Europe the Bronze Age - Iron Age transition was a period of social catastrophe; the new societies which emerged from it, in Orkney the broch society, in the Mediterranean the Iron Age empires of Persia, Athens, Macedonia, eventually Rome, were different from what had gone before. The Bronze Age social order which had been so well-organised, also had been stable - it lasted over a thousand years. The breakdown of such a society is liable to be catastrophic - no-one in it has known any other way of doing things, and the ruling class has a vested interest in perpetuating the system and resisting innovation. [A society in process of collapse accompanied by the degradation of its environment, may actually reinforce its social mechanisms against proper adaptation to the changing circumstances, up to the point where the breakdown goes beyond retrieval.]

When we look up at the black moor-covered hills of Birsay, Harray and Eday we are not looking at a natural wilderness - three thousands years ago those hills were green, and their present state is a consequence of a prehistoric man-made catastrophe. It led to several hundred years of violence - to which the brochs are testimony - before society recovered its stability. When the Western Roman Empire fell, leaving vast areas of its food-producing lands in the Mediterranean desertified or severely degraded, its Northern European fringe was relatively unaffected and it was possible for a new civilisation to develop there. Our Western civilisation today is global; this should be a sobering thought.

Rock-cut tomb at Sandfield

by Daphne Lorimer

The discovery of a rock-cut tomb at Sandfield sand quarry, Sandwick, was, for me, one of the most exciting archaeological finds of 1989: blue skies, yellow sand dunes, a rock cut pit with a stone cist at the bottom looking, for all the world, like a sarcophagus, transported Orkney to the banks of the Nile. There were, alas, mummies, just two cremations and some unburnt bones pushed in a corner. Normally phlegmatic archaeologists, however, showed distinct signs of excitement and this particular human bone analyst was thrilled to clamber down at risk of life and rather stout limb, to examine the unburnt remains *in situ*.

The unburnt bones were in the last stages of disintegration and dissolved into powder when touched. It was, on this count, that it was rather important that the position of each individual bone should be noted where it lay; otherwise, the fact that the skeleton was disarticulated and had been shoved, rather than placed, in the corner would have gone unrecorded. Close examination showed not one, but two skeletons in the pile: one of a young teenager which was probably, (but not yet proven to be) female, and some minute foetal bones about 28 weeks old.

Carbon 14 dating and other laboratory tests to determine sex, are now being undertaken and the results of these and the laboratory work on the other finds are awaited with eager anticipation. The report, when it comes should be most interesting.

An Orkney Wireless Museum

by Sandy Firth

There is a vast difference in time and distance between Orkney and the workshops of the Pioneer in electro magnetic telegraphy, and inventor of the dot-and-dash code, Samuel Finley Breeze Morse.

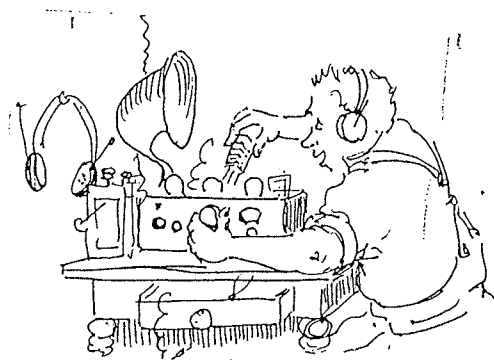
Morse's genius using a system of pulses enabled the telegraph system to span the world, and prepare the field for Marconi with his "Wireless" telegraphy - which did not need stations to be directly connected by a wire. All this took place in the second half of the 19th Century, with Marconi's Wireless Telegraphic Company being formed in 1900.

By 1907 speech by wireless became possible, and the flood gates on research and development opened even wider.

We have all heard of the 'Crystal Sets' of the 1920s, and the earlier "Cohirer" sets which were used on ships and, because of the huge spark generated when they were used to transmit, have the name "Sparks" which is still applied to operators to this day. Progress and discovery, which was largely done by Amateurs, was fast and furious. As Amateurs were pushed, by international law, on to "useless" frequencies they devised methods of using them, only to have their ideas taken over by Commercial Enterprise and they were moved along the frequency bands to another underdeveloped segment. Indeed this process is still with us today, with an International Body assigning frequencies etc. By the end of the 1920s manufacture of Radio (Wireless) receivers was under commercial production, from the Centres of mass production to the humble workshops of Island enthusiasts in Orkney.

He was locally educated, and served his time as an electrician in Kirkwall, but he had been bitten by the "Wireless Bug", almost from birth. He loved Radio, and Wireless Sets. By the time World War Two took him, as an electrician, to the huge Naval Base at Lyness, he had started hanging on to "old" or interesting equipment which came his way.

His collection grew, and grew. His knowledge grew with it. At the end of the War he realised that, although there were thousands of pieces of equipment, the very rate of development made things obsolete almost as soon as they



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left the design bench. The "Throw-away" age was here, and nothing was kept. Jim held on to what he thought was a good example of a particular item, or design.

By the 1970s his collection had reached a stage where it was conceivable that the public might be interested in seeing it. Encouraged by a fellow Amateur Radio Enthusiast, the late Jim Twatt, he set to work, at his old home in Saint Margaret's Hope, to convert an outhouse. An Orkney Wireless Museum was being built. By 1980 Jim had a booklet written on his hobby, as it affected Orkney, and in 1983 he opened his collection to the public. Jim MacDonald had plans as to what he wanted to do with his collection. He looked forward to retirement, from his post as an electrician with Orkney Health Board, to a time when he could put all his skills and knowledge into the rationalisation, restoration, and presentation of his collection. This was not to be. In 1987 he learned that he had cancer. Some people would have sat back, but Jim MacDonald threw himself into the Herculean task of getting as much done as he could in what time was left.

His Museum's great attraction is in the fact that a lot of exhibits can be touched. They sit in open display as they would have in the shops from whence they were sold. Every aspect of Wireless is covered, with particular emphasis on World War Two and the vast communications network set up for the Defence of Scapa Flow and the North Atlantic- It is all there! From the early power cells and crystal sets to early TV sets, with a section on Music from Phonographs to Juke Box. From valve hearing aids to Amateur Radio equipment, which has a strong home-brew element.

As well as seeing to the Museum's future, Jim MacDonald also made a Video Tour of his collection. For those who have seen it this is absolutely fascinating as no one can lecture like an enthusiast who really knows his subject. It also gives us all a record of how he wished things to be seen and understood.

In 1988 Jim MacDonald died.

In 1990 the Museum, which is open to the public every day during the Summer Months, will become a Trust, with his collection and building, donated by himself, in its care.

His son Peter MacDonald undertook the responsibility of continuing the awesome task of running the museum and fulfilling his father's wishes, with the entire MacDonald family giving support.

Jim MacDonald was a licensed Radio 'Ham' and since his death local Amateur enthusiasts have held "Special Event" days from the Museum, which has spread its already considerable reputation, and led to some very interesting donations.

An Orkney Wireless Museum is flourishing, and growing. It is well worth a visit as everyone will find something that will bring back memories.

GOOD NEWS!

The restoration of the fishermen's huts at Skippigeo by the pupils of Dounby School, led by their teacher, whose enthusiasm and combined commitment in this worthwhile project also brought their community together - we could all learn from such an example.

The appointment of Chris Morris to the Chair of Archaeology of Glasgow University. Very well known and highly respected for his work in Orkney, he will be one of the tutors at a Teaching Dig at Earl's Bu in Orphir from July 2 to 21... This is a great chance for anyone interested to "have a go". You can enrol for any number of days - forms available from D Omand, Centre for Continuing Education, University of Aberdeen, Braal, Halkirk, Caithness KW12 6XE (tel. 084783 - 420), Other tutor is Dr C Batey.

Beverley Smith, winning the Orkney! Norway Scholarship. She is already away to the Faroes, going on to Norway where she will be doing research on Viking objects.

PAPAY - the HOLY ISLE

by Marjorie Linklater

Among the many uncertainties surrounding preparations for a day's excursion to the North Isles the Heritage Society need have no qualms about the weather - it will be fine. Nor need we ever doubt the organisation of the day's programme. All that matters is to get to the boat in time wearing thick woollies and anoraks for the voyage, to be instantly discarded in the mid-summer heat which is typical of a May day in Papa Westray.

On Monday, 14th May, the *Orcadia* sailed from Kirkwall at 8.15 a.m. thronged with passengers mostly bound for Westray, but many doing the round trip which included Papa Westray, Eday, Sanday and Stronsay.

There is a great deal of wandering around the ship to begin with, avoiding the cold East wind, studying maps, locating islands, spotting birds, encountering friends and enjoying the benign sea. A frisson of excitement, almost of carnival, vibrates among the passengers. Maybe in the minds of some is the poignant recognition that the days of the *Orcadia* are numbered.

The main objective of our expedition is the church at St Boniface on the island of Papay.

On arrival our little party, including two archaeologists Dr Raymond Lamb and Ms Beverley Smith, are driven to the end of the road leading to the church of St Boniface.

It is mid-day and the sun shining (of course) as we assemble in the lea of the church. No time, alas, to linger over the various gravestones (always fascinating in island kirkyards). Without being marshalled we assemble around the resting place of Traills - two adjacent layers obligingly surrounded by a low parapet and situated at the gable-end of the church. Perched on this surround we decorously picnic.

I very much doubt whether any or many have enjoyed the privilege of eating a self-chosen lunch and listening at the same time to a truly enthralling exposition of the origin of ecclesiastical power in Europe before and up to the building of St Boniface in the 12th century; an immense sweep of history originating with Islamic domination in Eastern Europe and the tyranny of the caliphs which was replaced by Charlemagne (742 - 814) whose empire covered all Europe from Spain to Constantinople and spread North bringing Christianity to Northumbria and thence to Papay.

It is Raymond's vision that the church of St Boniface be restored as a place of worship; a retreat available to all denominations (or none) for contemplation and spiritual regeneration. This concept motivated the Heritage Society's expedition. The present building was in use as the parish church up to the 1920s when the Traills built the present church more conveniently situated within easy reach of most of the community.

On this day, as we listen to Raymond's discourse, we share the vision and understand the implications, but the uninitiated bureaucrats in Edinburgh are at present bent on reducing the present shell of St Boniface to a well-preserved ruin to serve as a museum.

A complex of unexcavated mounds and the place-names that survive indicate a considerable settlement adjacent to St Boniface. These include a chapel and a convent. Also a sea-eroded broch. A BROCH? Who can explain the brochs? Or the Picts? Well, Raymond connects the two and throws light on these great mysteries.

But now, having digested our packed lunch and the superb exposition of St Boniface church, we set forth to the eastern shore of the island to examine the remains of the Broch. Luckily there are young enthusiasts, uncontaminated by the received wisdom of an older generation, who can accept the connection of quarrelsome Picts with the building of the brochs. These young women also have the seeing eye of youthful enthusiasm and discover random bones in the exposed midden of the broch. Mostly domestic animal bones probably as old as the broch itself, indicating a pastoral way of life.

On then along the cliff edge to Knap of Howar. Here Beverley takes over. She, as a student, was on the excavations with Anna Ritchie in the early '70s. These two Neolithic dwellings are reckoned to be - by carbon-dating - the oldest prehistoric domestic dwellings in Northern Europe. Our Chairman and Vice-Chairman - both qualified in various aspects of construction - contributed valuable speculation as to the possible method and objective of some of the skills required by these so-called "primitive" people. Beverley, who directed the excavation of the Howe - an incredibly complex site this side of Stromness (the artifacts are on view in the superb exhibition currently on view in the Tankerness House Museum) - brought the Knap of Howar alive to her privileged audience.

Time then for a saunter towards the farm

buildings of Holland House - early 18th century AD. Yes, we've moved abruptly from pre-history to horse-driven machines of the 18th/19th centuries. The round Horse-Engine is a perfect example of its kind in Orkney, the threshing machine having been driven by 2 - 3 pairs of Clydesdale horses.

At Beltane Guest House, part of Papay Co-operative, what a tea awaited us! Home-baked scones, warm from the oven, with home-made jam. Drop-scones, parkins all home-baked.

Some of us opted out of the next event - a visit to the Holm of Papay where there are three ancient cairns and a chambered tomb.

A walk along the shore of North Wick to visit an old friend was an alternative to site-seeing for one member of the group. Bird-sound everywhere - larks trilling, snipe drumming, linties carolling, gulls screaming and curlew calling an orchestration to rival a Maxwell Davies concerto!

Then a leisurely return to the pier-head where we rest in the sun, sheltered from the wind and gaze across to Westray as we wait for the boat. Once aboard it is straight to the diningroom as instructed. The tea at the Co-op should have sufficed, but by 8 o'clock there we are sitting at white-clothed tables in the dining-room of the *Orcadia* waited on by the ship's crew who serve us with delicious soup followed by roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, potatoes and



GOOD NEWS!

Re-establishment of the cast iron pierhead light tower on the west pier, Kirkwall Basin.

A new extension to St Peter's House, Stromness which happily marries the rather undistinguished earlier one to the original building, the typically large, square Old Kirk manse.

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carrots. Cunard's Queen Elizabeth could scarcely have done better.

Alas, the Orcadia's days are numbered; soon she'll be replaced by a swift, noisy and efficient ro-ro vessel with self-catering and plastic utensils.

A few intrepid members of our group did an archaeological survey of the ship's bar, situated beneath layers of varied cultures, in what might be called the bowels of the boat. The drinking habits of the late 20th century show a remarkable advance on the uncouth behaviour of an earlier era. Family parties now replace the mostly-masculine hard-drinking, heavy-smoking clientele of yester-year; toddlers now amongst the tots, and only a handful of customers propping up the bar. Not a sign of cigarette smoke. The O.H.S. researchers noted these changes with satisfaction. Naturally there was no sign of safety precautions. No comforting voice saying: "This ship conforms to the highest standards of safety." But then the only danger immediately apparent to parents of young children is the risk of falling overboard from the upper deck. From this foreseeable hazard kiddies in the ship's bar are mercifully protected.

The end of a perfect day 10.30 p.m. at Kirkwall pier in the "simmer's dim."

One last thought. We were not great spenders in the Co-op shop. If anyone regrets not having brought back a memento of Papay, 6 mugs are available from 20 Main Street, Kirkwall. Tel. 3619. £3.50 each. St Boniface and the horse-mill are depicted on each, with an arctic tern and *primula scotica* all designed by Peter Davis.

Treasurer's Report

I mentioned in my report last year that the Orkney Islands' Council were being approached with a view to them taking over payment of the archaeologist's salary in full as this was proving to be a great strain on the finances of the Society. Agreement has been reached that the Society will pay over to the Council the annual covenant it receives from Occidental and the Council will then make up the rest of the salary. This arrangement will certainly save the Society a significant sum each year, which is good news at a time when the maintenance of the computer system and archaeologist's office become more and more expensive.

In general, the Society has been breaking even over the past year but this year should be a bit easier, financially. Full details of the financial position are available on request and the financial year end has been changed to 31st August from 15th May in order that a more up to date position can be presented at the AGM in September/October.

Finally, I would be grateful if any members who have not yet paid their annual subscription of £3 could do so by completing the enclosed Bankers Order and returning it to me or alternatively by forwarding a cheque. Thank you for your assistance.

Brian Douglas
c/o The Royal Bank of Scotland plc
1 Victoria Street
Kirkwall
Orkney

BAD NEWS!

The deplorable condition of the large windows in two prominent but now, sadly, derelict shops in Finstown and Stromness.

The cutting of roadside verges before strictly necessary, wiping out the potentially rich crop of our beautiful May/June wildflowers which are second to none. Obviously road safety is a priority but more thought must be given to this.

Demolition of Seaside Cottage, St Mary's Village, Holm, for little apparent reason.

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Obituaries

The Rev Harold Mooney

There could have been no more suitable person than Harold Mooney, who died last year, to preside over the O.H.S.; both in his life and in his character he embodied the Orkney heritage.

Born and educated in Kirkwall, the son of a distinguished Orcadian, he spent almost his entire life in his native islands, apart from the period of his training for the ministry in Edinburgh. Following ordination he served the parish of Deerness for fifty years, returning on retirement to live with his sister Embla in Kirkwall, she being herself another remarkable member of the Mooney family who sadly pre-deceased him.

The Mooneys were brought up in an atmosphere steeped in scholarship, the great Cathedral of St Magnus a lifelong interest of the son as well as the father. Harold's many notes on the subject form the basis of much of the material in the present Guide to St Magnus Cathedral. Both Embla and Harold had recollections of the Faroese scholar Jakob Jakobsen whose researches into the Orkney Norn and Orkney place names did much to inspire Hugh Marwick, another old friend of the family.

Eric Linklater in light-hearted mood once remarked that of Orkney's two saints, his patron was Rognavd while Edwin Muir's was clearly Magnus. Pursuing this thought, you could say that Harold Mooney belonged to the Magnus cast of mind. Those OHS members fortunate to have attended the 1984 conference in Birsay organised by Raymond Lamb, will remember the service conducted in St Magnus Church there, and his brief sermon which seemed while a message for the present, to bring the early church suddenly into our midst.

Looking back on his life in these islands is to be reminded of Pascal's saying: "All the unhappiness of man consists in his not being able to live happily in a room by himself"

Harold Mooney found fulfilment in the service of one parish for fifty years and in the life, past and present, of these islands. Not for him the frenetic rush, the competition to get there, first so characteristic of our times.

Gentleness, contentment, unassuming goodness radiated from his face.

Standing at his graveside in the autumn sunshine and listening to the seabirds on the shore was to feel Harold's peaceful presence and to be aware that he had brought a part of heaven closer to Orkney.

In acting as President of OHS until the day of his death he conferred an honour on the Society we shall always remember with pride.

Laura Grimond

The Society also pays tribute to the following members who have died:

Ann Bacon, The Ninth, Orphir, a previous valued secretary, who left an important post in Washington to settle in Orkney.

Robert Bain, Hall of Tankerness, who was a welcoming, popular host for many an Open Day at his historic home and gardens.

Malcolm Stewart, through whose generosity The Hoy Trust came into being in 1972.

Mrs. Barbara J. Walls, The Anchorage, Kirkwall.

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5000

YEARS EXHIBITION

ORKNEY BC

This is the year of the conference! Following on from Winnipeg University's Orkney-Rupert's Land Colloquium in Stromness, fascinating for those interested in Hudson Bay history, and Towards 2000, promoted by the Northern Studies Centre in association with Aberdeen University, with its very necessary and equally captivating exploration of paths into the future, Orkney Museums Service and the Northern Studies Centre, with the assistance of the Heritage Society, are organising a conference on the Orcadian Neolithic and Bronze Age. It will take place in October, 12 - 14, to coincide with the opening of 'GRAVE MATTER', an exhibition about cist graves, with special reference to last year's discovery at Skaill. Details from Anne Brundie, Orkney Museums Service from July.

Pier Arts Centre Stromness

**5000
YEARS OF ORKNEY ART
9 June-22 July**

As the title suggests, *5000 Years of Orkney Art* spans an extensive period of time. The art featured ranges from the prehistoric to the contemporary and is an exploration and celebration of Orkney art from the beginning of the island's history to the present day. The exhibition presents a selection of exhibits ranging from the exceptional to the unusual, and includes photographs, prints, sculpture, architecture and selected museum exhibits as well as paintings in different media. Although contemporary craft is excluded, examples of work by craftsmen from previous centuries features, and their contribution to art history is examined and assessed.

Within the very broad remit of the exhibition, recurring themes have been identified. Sections dealing with *Sea, Land and Stone* feature, with sub sections exploring *Light, Symbol and Craft*.

The exhibition has been researched by Ann Manson, and there is a catalogue with a foreword by Professor Colin Renfrew.

INTERPRETATION of our heritage :

Orkney Museums are providing a better service to foreign visitors with the inspired help of TVEI pupils and teachers who are busy turning our information boards in several languages.

"Queek questeeun ... are they dooan id in Orcadian teu?" Probably too difficult... Spelling of place-names seems to raise enough controversy, never mind all the rest!

Eynhallow Trip

MESSAGE from Sandy

Trusting this news will be on hand in time you have two chances of a Eynhallow trip this summer, the first on 23 June, leaving Tingwall at 1930 returning at 2030; the second on 14 July, leaving Tingwall at 1230 and returning 1530. Tickets from Kirkwall Tourist Office. RSPB members will be joining us for the first trip.

GURNESS

by the Curator

Rita Nicolson

The road leading to the Broch of Gurness is long and winding.

Travelling it, one can absorb the beauty of the shore and its wildlife. Birds of many different breeds, wild flowers of all kinds and some very interesting mammals. Also if you are lucky enough to be there the sunset out over the Atlantic is something not to be missed.

Sitting like a huge pebble between Rousay and the mainland is Eynhallow, or Holy Isle as it is sometimes known. When the tide is running, even on a calm day, the sea on either side of it can boil and you can hear it roaring from quite a distance.

On the shore below the Broch, if you have the patience and are very quiet, you could be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of seals bobbing just off the shore or occasionally basking on the rocks when the tide is out. Or, ever rarer, usually quite early in the morning I have seen otters playing among the seaweed unaware of my presence. Meanwhile on the land and in the air the wild flowers and herbs and a rich variety of bird life come and go with the seasons.

I first saw the Broch of Gurness as a bride, when, strolling along the beach towards Aikerness my husband said he wanted me to see something special. We followed the path to the point overlooking Eynhallow Sound and there, on top of the next brae, was that something special. An Iron Age settlement. Hidden from view, it was totally unexpected unless you knew where it was. I never dreamed then that one day I would be entrusted with the care of this



wonderful site. The Broch of Gurness is still a special place for me, as I like to think it was for those people who made it their home all those years ago.

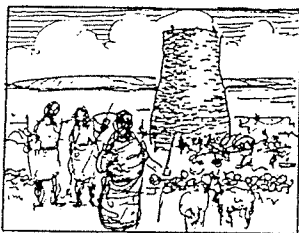
As I wander around the site I can almost imagine it as it was then. I've always had a vivid imagination so the picture that comes to mind is very rich and colourful. Up and down the coast overlooking Eynhallow Sound were 7 other brochs, 3 on the Evie side and 4 on the island of Rousay. Each of these would have been a self-contained village unit with the broch as its centre, so here we have close neighbours along the shore and just across the water. On a clear day you can see the remains of the Midhowe Broch on Rousay.

As you walk around you see the site open out before you. The massive outer and inner ditches and the imposing stonework of the broch itself. All built by people who were obviously skilled in masonry but without the tools and machines of today. I think this makes the construction of the settlement all the more wonderful.

To enter the village you approach from the causeway and from this point you can see how impressive the settlement must have looked, with the houses opening off the main passageway leading up to the entrance to the broch itself. The houses, although not what we would call luxurious by today's standards, had all the mod-cons of the day. For instance, they had the fireplace in the centre of the floor which kept the dwelling warm and provided somewhere to cook. There were built-in

cupboards in the walls to keep items in, and even a stone tank set into the floor to keep the shell-fish fresh in. So if you like, they had central heating, kitchen cupboards and even a fridge.

Many people regard the people who lived around this time as being primitive, but having looked around their settlement I feel that is quite wrong. They were accomplished builders - just look at the broch and how long it has stood. They were farmers rearing animals and growing crops for food and they were also fishermen and traders.



At the centre of the village stands the broch. In its days even more imposing than it is now. Although not as large as the Broch of Mousa in Shetland which was some 13m high it is nevertheless quite a feat of engineering. Built wide at the base and tapering toward the top the massive walls are double thickness with passages (now unfortunately collapsed in on themselves) within them. These are at ground level and also it appears there may have been more at a higher level, possibly leading to the top of the broch. From there a watch could be kept in times of siege or attack for of course the broch was the main stronghold for the settlement. In the event of attack all the villagers would gather inside for protection with as many of their animals as possible. It would have been possible to hold out for quite some time within its walls for it was a self-contained living unit, even having its own well 13 feet below its floor reached by a small set of steps which survives to this day. Down in the well at about eye level is an opening which could be the remains of an escape tunnel or possibly just a cooler larder for storing food.

Since it was first built many changes have taken place and like any house of today, walls have been added or taken away to improve each building over a period of time. As with most things nothing remains the same for long, and in time the broch became almost empty and the sounds of the village life all but stopped. Then came a new age, a later Iron Age or Pictish Age. These people built cellular dwellings half into the rubble and for a while they persevered with the site and the rich arable land around about. But eventually this new age also came to a close and the people left and Gurness became silent. Only the sea reclaiming its coast, birds and wildlife were its only inhabitants. Earth and rubble over the years covered the broch and gradually grass and wild flowers carpeted it. The Norsemen finally arrived but they did not settle at Gurness. They built new houses and farms nearer where the modern-day farm of Aikerness stands and only used Gurness as a fitting place to bury some of their dead.

The mists of time covered the site and it was left as just a mound until in 1929 Robert Rendall, the Orkney scholar, lost the leg of the stool he was sitting on while sketching on the top of the mound. This was the beginning of a new era for Gurness as it was completely excavated and now once again its rings with the sounds of people, children, dogs and wildlife as people come from all over the world to take a step back in time and wonder at the skill and ingenuity of the people who built this place. We exchange ideas and with the knowledge of trained archaeologists more and more details are coming to light.

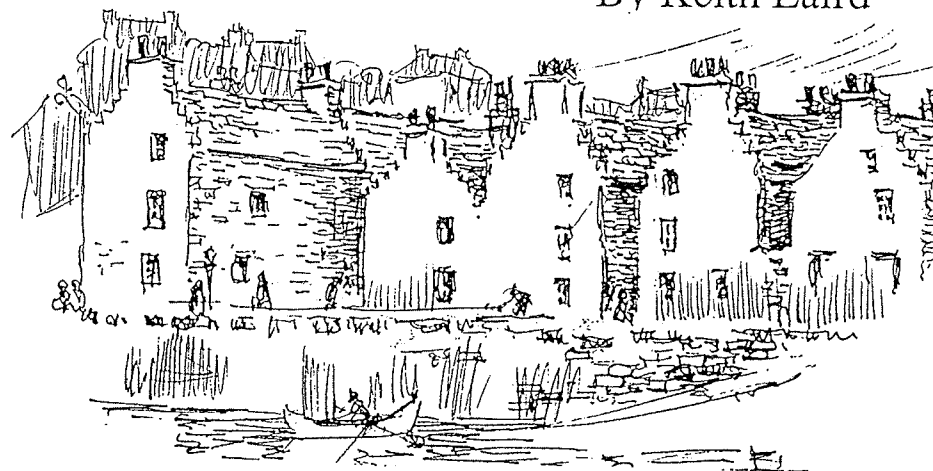
I still like to use my imagination, as do other people who visit. Why not come along and exchange with me your views of a very special place. I feel the people who built Gurness should be thanked for leaving us with so much.

What say you?

CHALLENGE !

The Changing Face of Kirkwall in the 90s.

By Keith Laird



The next decade will see Kirkwall undergo radical changes which will affect all of us. Superstores at Pickaquooy, sewage treatment, traffic and parking reorganisation, and a major harbour development are amongst the most dramatic. There is much that could be improved in Kirkwall, but we must be careful to protect the heritage and character of the town in implementing such major schemes.

The value of public response to proposed developments has been illustrated by amendments to the preferred option in Kirkwall's traffic plan.

Orkney Heritage Society referred, in its response to the HFA final report, to the need for relocation

of the BP oil depot, and strongly recommended the extension of Shore Street to connect with Cromwell Road.

Whilst the first of these comments clearly reflects public concern over an unacceptable and inappropriate industrial site, the second loses sight of the primary concern of the OHS - preserving the inherent character and quality of areas such as the harbour front.

No mention was made by the Society of the proposed three-lane road system designed to facilitate access to the oil depot and the proposed marshalling area, nor was the OHS among the objectors to this insensitive marshalling scheme.

Orkney Books 1989 - Mid 1990

- Anither Pot o'Broth by Jack Cooper. Orkney View. £5.25
 The Chambered Cairns of Orkney by J L Davidson and A S Henshall. Edinburgh U.P. £35.00
 Dive Scapa Flow by Rod Macdonald. Mainstream (1990) £9.95
 George Mackay Brown's Greenvoe, Scotnotes 6 by Alan MacGillivray. Association for Scottish Literary Studies. £2.00 - school/college guide-notes.
 Light in the North edit by H W M Cant and H M Firth. Orkney Press. £5.95
 Maes Howe by David Clarke and Patrick Maguire. HMSO £1.20
 The Masked Fisherman and other Stories by George Mackay Brown. John Murray. £12.95
 Orkney Bird Report 1989 edit. by Chris Booth, Mildred Cuthbert and Eric Meek. W.R. Rendall. £2.50
 The Orkneys in Norwegian History by Professor Knut Helle. Hordaland Fylkeskommune. (1988) - bilingual booklet
 Skara Brae by Patrick Ashmore et.al HMSO £1.50
 Tales of Elwick Bay by Bill and Sylvia Dennison. Kirkwall Press, Orcadian Ltd. £6.45
 Trees and Shrubs in Orkney by Alan H Bremner and Elaine R Bullard. Orcadian Ltd (1990) £1.95
 Tryst on Egilsay by George Mackay Brown. Celtic Cross Press. approx £13
 The Wreck of the Archangel by George Mackay Brown. John Murray. £11.95
 Writers in Brief:- George Mackay Brown. Book Trust Scotland. £0.95 - eight-brief colour leaflet with short bibliography and selection of work.

Due out in October 1990

An Orkney Anthology : The Selected Works of Ernest Walker Marwick
 by John Robertson. Scottish Academic Press. £25.00

Children's Books

- A Peedie Story by T A M Nichol.
 Orcadian Ltd (1988) £3.95
 Magnus in Orkney Looking at Nature by Orkney Pre-School Play Association. Orcadian Ltd. £1.50 - story and colouring book
 Peedie Peebles' Summer or Winter Book by Mairi Hedderwick.
 The Bodley Head. £4.95

Maps

- Kirkwall and Stromness 1902
 (Old Ordnance Survey Maps). Alan Godfrey Maps. £1.50
 Leisure Map of Orkney, 1:10,000.
 Bartholomew. £2.50.
 Complete series of Ordnance Survey Pathfinder (1:25,000) maps of Orkney now available.

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It was very disappointing to learn that the OHS had concluded that there is no alternative, and has suggested that as a widened Shore Street should alleviate the traffic problems, the development will perhaps not be such a bad neighbour. Does this mean that the marshalling yard project has the Society's blessing as a necessary part of the harbour development, more important than restoring the character of Shore Street, following the removal of the oil depot?

There has long been concern over changes to Shore Street. In 1924 those who recognised the importance of the Shore Street houses, including Orkney Antiquarian Society and Stanley Currier, advocated reconstruction of deteriorating properties. However, Council opinion, financial considerations, and, to a great extent, public apathy were responsible for the Shore Street demolitions - and the subsequent siting of the oil depot.

In 1990 we have an opportunity to correct that mistake.

The previous Council paid scant attention to the views of the local Community Council and of over 165 local residents. With a new Council, the time is right for this development to be reappraised, and for the Society, as guardians of the character of Kirkwall, to press for a review of the need for a marshalling yard. It is an expensive and unnecessary project, and will deal as big a blow to the character and appearance of Shore Street as did the siting of the oil depot in this area. Perhaps worse - if this particular development is completed before the argument to relocate BP is won then the case for resiting the depot will be seriously weakened, and if the depot is allowed to remain opposite the

marshalling yard, Shore Street will in effect become an extension of the industrial site at Hatston.

If we are to be concerned with conservation then we must have clear priorities. Will developments help to preserve, develop or destroy the character of the town, and can the monetary or environmental cost be justified?

The Halcro Fox and Associates report makes repeated reference to the historical character of Kirkwall: "The inherent asset which the town should maximise in developing its tourist base is the waterfront aspect. *In this context there is a strong case for adopting policies of restricting waterfront uses.*" If this is clear to hard-nosed visiting consultants, how can it have escaped our local Heritage Society?

I would urge OHS to reconsider its position with regard to this development and join the campaign to protect Shore Street against this concrete and tarmac onslaught; P and O usage remains hypothetical, and the suggestion that this area would make a good car park has to be the craziest retrospective justification for the irrevocable defacement of

historic Shore Street.

Once the marshalling area project has been defeated, OHS can then turn its attention to a long-term, sensitive and socially valuable solution to the Shore Street problem - persuading the OIC to conclude its protracted negotiations with BP, relocate the oil depot, and give the site over to an appropriate housing development that captures something of the spirit of the houses thoughtlessly destroyed during the 1930s.

'an expensive
and
unnecessary
project'

GOOD NEWS!

Happy Valley! No better way to enrich our heritage ... Long may Edwin Harrold share it with us.

Books connected with Orkney

A Fringe of Leaves by Patrick White. Penguin (1976) £4.95 - based on the story of Eliza Frazer

A Twelvemonth and a Day by Christopher Rush. AUP (1985) £5.50 - re-issue of the book that inspired Venus Peter

Crab and Lobster Fishing by Alan Spence. Fishing News Books Ltd. £15.00

The Pictish Trail by Anthony Jackson. Orkney Press. £3.95

Picts by Anna Ritchie. HMSO. £3.95

Prehistoric Scotland by Ann MacSween and Mick Sharp. B T Batsford Ltd. £14.95

Runes by Ralph Elliot. Manchester UP. £25.00 - 2nd edition (1st edition publ 1959)

The Sin Eater by Deborah Randall. Bloodaxe. £4.95 - poetess now living in Orkney.

Scotland and Scandinavia 800 - 1800 by Grant G Simpson. John Donald. (1990) £20.00

That Rubens Guy by John McGill. Mainstream (1990) £9.95

The Truth of Imagination - a collection of reviews and essays by Edwin Muir. AUP. £14.50

Where to Watch the Birds in Scotland by Mike Madders and Julia Wel-

BAD NEWS !

The continuing eyesore of The Phoenix, a currently inadequately provided public building with great potential for serving the Orkney community in many ways and enhancing a bleak area of Kirkwall, if the existing attractive plan could be brought to fruition. Shetland invested in the Cliekimin Centre, why can't Orkney invest in the Pheonix!

GOOD NEWS !

Roads renewed - to the top of Wideford Hill and to the Brough of Birsay. The rebuilding of the Stromness "Double Houses" pier, at last! A solid and beautiful job.

Readers' Notes

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

'ANDI' INFORMATION ...

- 1 OHS Minutes, Newsletters and Periodicals are available in Kirkwall and Stromness Libraries.
 - 2 All committee members are approachable!
 - 3 OHS welcomes discussion on any topics relevant to the society, which might be more diverse than people think.
 - 4 If you think we are irrelevant, and you are not already a member, please JOIN and make us less so, especially if you are YOUNG! Look out for the green forms or contact Brian, our treasurer, at the Royal Bank, Kirkwall.
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