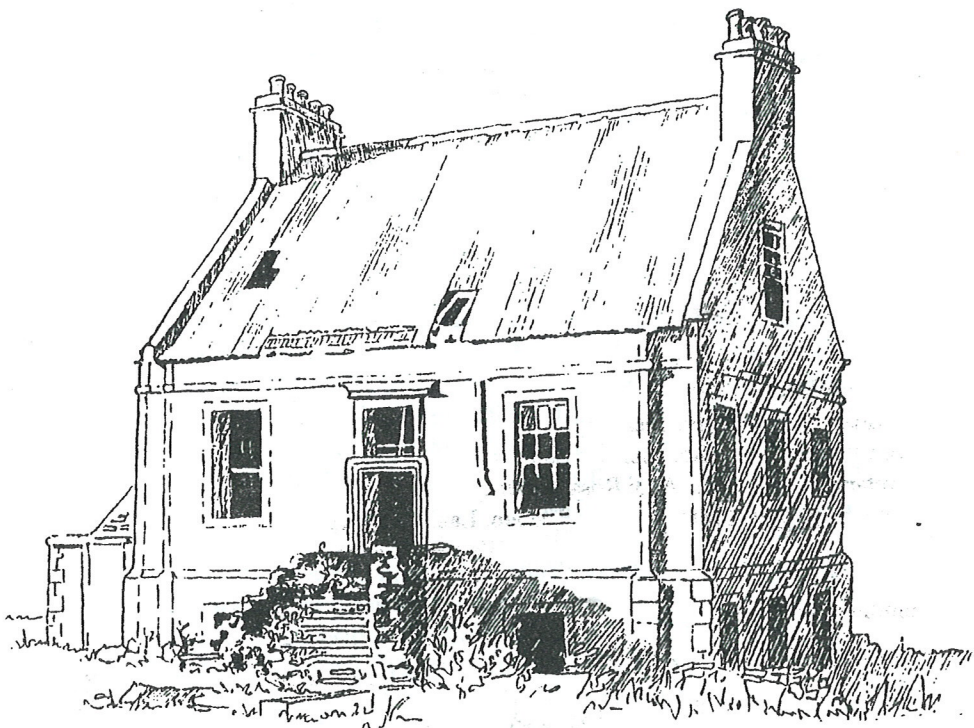


Orkney Heritage Society



Newsletter 1998

Objectives of the Orkney Heritage Society

The aims of the Society are 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, publication conferences, publicity and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

Committee

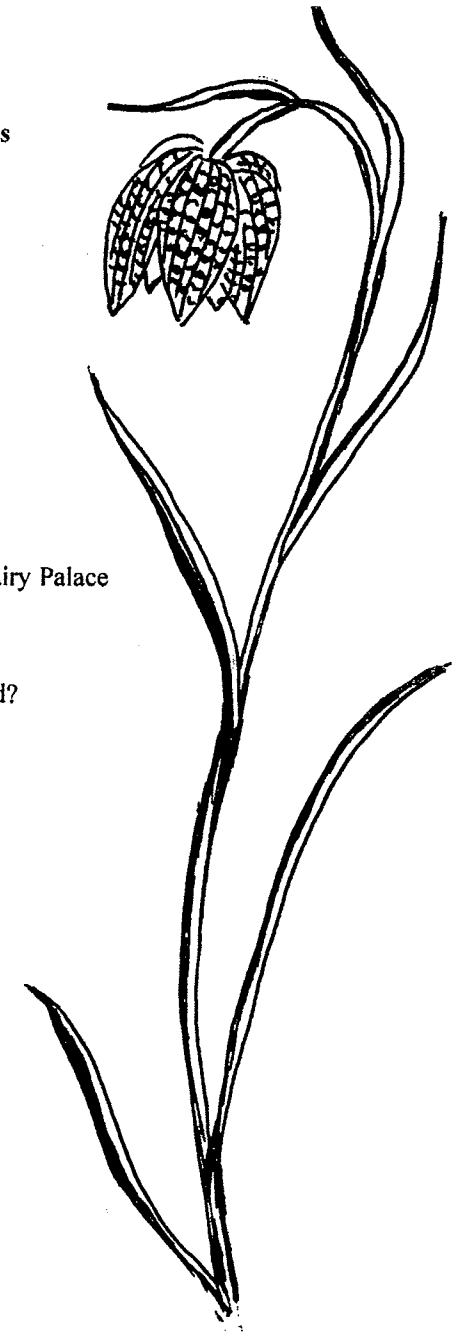
President	Mr Ian Heddle, Clemyan, Ireland Road, Stenness.
Vice President	Mr. Sandy Firth, Edan, Berstane Road, Kirkwall
Chairman	Mrs. Daphne Lorimer, Scorradale, Orphir.
Vice Chairman	Mrs. Ann Brundle, Hillside School, Twatt
Secretary	Ms Andi Ross, Outerdykes, Stenness
Minute Secretary	Mrs. Sheena Wenham, Langwell, Orphir.
Treasurer	Mr. Neil Mc.Cance, West End , Burray

Committee	Mr. Alistair Tulloch, 29, Reid Crescent, Kirkwall
	Mrs. Hilda Firth, Edan, Berstane Road, Kirkwall
	Mr. Peter Leith, Lanbigging, Ireland Road, Stenness.
	Matilda Webb, Quoybow, Cairston Road, Stromness.
	Paul Newman, Sandesquoy, Tankerness
	Mrs. Betty Tulloch, 13, Craigiefield Park, St. Ola
	Mr. Maurice Hayes, Summerlea, Burray.
	Mr. Philip Astley, 35a Albert Street, Kirkwall
	Mrs. Iris Heddle, Clemyan, Ireland Road, Stenness

Archaeologist Mrs. Julie Gibson, Hullion, Rousay / Orkney Heritage Society, Janitor,s house, Old Academy Buildings, Stromness

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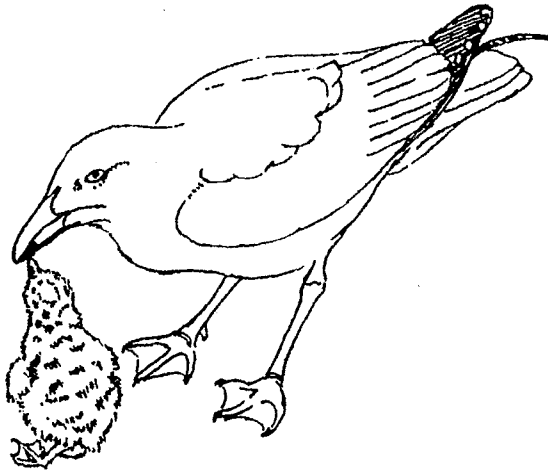
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Editorial

Interest in Orkney's heritage has grown rapidly since publication of the last newsletter with the formation of new centres and trusts, and increased interest in those already in existence. We have tried in this publication to cover most of the new; if you have been missed, please contact the chairman, or any of the editors. So many new books have been published that a book review is impracticable, but some forthcoming books are mentioned. For those of you who have read Dr. Olaf Cuthbert's book, or indeed have interest in the illustrious Bishop Reid, the article on his missing plaque will be of great interest. Ever more people are attending the Society's monthly lectures which are often arranged at very short notice. Please continue to watch the Orcadian, or listen to Radio Orkney for details and bring along your friends.

The Newsletter this time, as you will see from our Chairman's Message, is a Firth/Heddle production. The problems due to Hilda's computer not wishing to converse with Iris' word processor have now been overcome. Fortunately Graham Bevan of Stromness Academy's Computer Department, who has printed most of our Newsletters since they went into magazine form, can cope with both fonts and scan illustrations as well. We are most grateful for his help, and to his mother, Elizabeth Bevan for her advice and invaluable assistance.



Message from the Chairman.

The past year has been one of growth, accomplishment and change for the Orkney Heritage Society, but it was also one of great sadness as, on June 29th, our President, Marjorie Linklater died. The Heritage Society owes Marjorie a big debt of gratitude and she is sadly missed. The Presidential mantle has now fallen on to Ian Heddle's competent shoulders and we wish him many happy years wearing it.

There was a steady growth of membership numbers to over two hundred over the year (nurtured by our Membership Secretary, Philip Astley). It was particularly noticeable in the increased numbers attending the Society's lectures which also attracted increasing numbers of non-members. The Vice-Chairman has done wonders of persuasion on visiting Archaeologists and Historians - she insists that they fall over themselves to address us. The one lecture that the Heritage Society, itself, sponsored, the Mona Sinclair Lecture, did in fact lead to the lecturer being taken to see a site on Rousay which he subsequently excavated and which proved to be of considerable interest. On three occasions we invited other Societies to join us - the Orkney Norway Friendship Society (twice and on both occasions they provided delicious Norwegian "eats") and the Vintage Club. It proved to be a very popular move and one which we hope to repeat. The annual trip to Eynhallow arranged by Sandy Firth, proved to be the usual popular sell-out.

The year saw the launch and development of the Orkney Archaeological and the Orkney Heritage Property Trusts under the Chairmanship of myself and Ian Heddle, respectively. There were changes in archaeological personnel and the setting up of a publications Sub-committee with ambitious plans for future productions. Our thanks are due to Elizabeth Bevan who has done noble work in the production of a high standard Newsletter for many years, and it was with great regret, that her resignation was accepted and our good wishes go to the new Editors, Hilda Firth and Iris Heddle. Elizabeth has kindly consented to be their consultant. The Society has kept a strict eye on Planning Applications and plans for the International Neolithic Conference next

September are well under way.

At the end of May, after eighteen years as Orkney's Archaeologist, Raymond Lamb left us for a teaching post with Thurso College, but we have been very fortunate to have subsequently secured the services of Julie Gibson who, as the former Sites and Monuments Warden for Historic Scotland, has not only worked with Raymond, but has a great knowledge of Orkney's Archaeology.

As Chairman of the Orkney Archaeological Trust as well as your Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to report that OAT has been successfully launched and is starting to make an impression. Our Archaeologist, who has managed to attract funding for several large schemes, is entering into negotiations for teaching with Orkney College and the University of the Highlands and Islands and with the University of Aberdeen. She is also involved with Dr. Jane Downes and the OIC Educational Department in an educational programme for Orkney Schools funded by Historic Scotland. The Archaeologist has been formally seconded by the Heritage Society to work for OAT, but she is still, technically, The Heritage Society's employee. The grant from the Elf Consortium which (together with OIC) funds the Archaeologist was renewed last November. The Society, Orkney and Archaeology in general owe the Consortium a great debt of gratitude for their far-sighted and enlightened generosity. It is hoped that a Service Agreement will be concluded between OAT and the Orkney Islands Council for archaeological services. The Council has also supplemented the very large grant Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission have given the Trust to provide the new, up-to-date computerised Sites and Monuments Record system which has replaced our antiquated and, indeed, defunct equipment.

The Orkney Heritage Property Trust under Ian Heddle and the ramifications of the Publications' Sub-Committee (Anne Brundle for Publications and Hilda Firth and Iris Heddle for the Newsletter) will be discussed elsewhere.

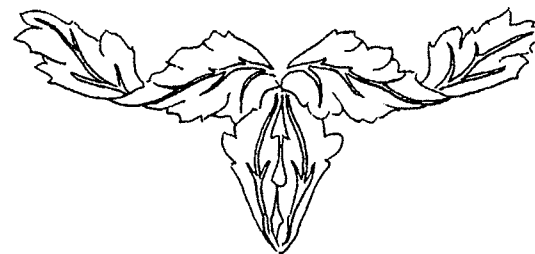
The Orkney Heritage Society maintains a presence on the Countryside Commission and it has not neglected its function as the guardian of

Orkney's past. As the result of strenuous work by Sandy Firth, ably supported by Gordon Linklater, the appeal by B.P. against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission for the destruction of Tunnigar, Shore Street, was turned down.

The International Neolithic Conference will take place from Thursday 10th to lunch time on Monday 14th this September. It follows immediately after the Science Festival, thereby extending the visitor season. All but three of the lecturers accepted with gratifying alacrity (and they had prior commitments). The lecturers include speakers from Poland, Holland, France, Denmark and Eire as well as speakers from all parts of the United Kingdom. An exciting day of Field Trips, a Neolithic Fair and an evening of popular lectures is being organised by Anne Brundle, open to all comers for Saturday 12th September. We have been very fortunate in securing the most effective services of Kate Towsey as the Conference Secretary and preparations are well under way. Do get in touch with Kate for details.

I would like to conclude by saying how grateful I am for the support of all the members of the Committee, in particular to the Vice-Chairman, ever a source of fertile ideas and hard work.

Daphne Lorimer.



OBITUARIES

Marjorie Linklater



Marjorie Linklater was one of Orkney's great personalities and much has been written about the many facets of her life, but, to the Orkney Heritage Society she gave many years of valued service in turn, as Committee member, Chairman, Secretary and President. She was a fighter and took a leading role in the battles over uranium mining and the Stormy bank affair. She followed on from Laura Grimond in fund-raising for the restoration of St. Boniface Church in Papa Westray and the installation of a memorial plaque to Laura inside the building - which she made very much her own concern. I, personally miss her very much. In the latter days when she was unable to attend meetings, I used to report on our deliberations and found her pungent, wise and witty comments not only a help, but a delight. She is a sore loss.

Editors note. As it is the centenary of the birth of Eric Linklater in 1999, we hope to publish an article on both Marjory and Eric in celebration.

George Mackay Brown

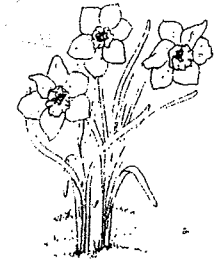
This April, near the second Anniversary of his death, we remember too GEORGE MACKAY BROWN who was also a member of this Society.

We are proud that he is acknowledged world-wide "not just as a very good regional writer but one with a transcendent vision by which he transformed the familiar Orkney scene into something timeless and universal"

Archie Bevan his literary executor, quoted from an article for The Independent Magazine, goes on to say "He was beyond question one of the greatest wordsmiths of our time. A visionary with his feet firmly on the ground, George had a strong sense of his place in the local community. For well over quarter of a century he wrote a column for The Orcadian, after a previous literary apprenticeship as a correspondent with The Orkney Herald. His last 'Brinkies Brae' contribution appeared two days before his death. Characteristically, it was a welcome to Spring and a salute to April his favourite month of the year".

Happily, however, we look forward to the May publication of The Island of Women and other Stories, a collection gathered from the wealth of work he left behind. Alas, George was not the only writer we lost in 1996. BESSIE GRIEVE was his long-established friend and colleague in words.

'Countrywoman.'



The Heritage Society would be failing in its duty if no mention were made of Bessie Grieve, whose great love of Orkney and its flora and fauna made the reading of her weekly article in the 'Orcadian' a must. Her articles left one with a feeling of warmth. One lady said that she was thinking of cancelling the paper because, with the untimely deaths of George Mackay Brown and Bessie coming so close together, she felt so saddened by the loss of their articles. I have to agree, even after this space of time.

Bessie was interested in everything, her headmaster was once heard to say that she was one of the cleverest people he ever taught.

H.M.F.

Brigadier Malcolm Dennison- a Personal Appreciation.

I first got to know Malcolm through the Historic Buildings Trust, of which he was Chairman, enjoying conversations about our experiences in the RAF. He told me that during his time as a Squadron-leader he had been at Waterbeach, just outside Cambridge, and wondered what the village was like now. When Margot and I were in Cambridge that year we went to Waterbeach, and to another hostelry in the City which he had mentioned as having been the Squadron's favourite. Photos and signed momentos were collected and taken to him afterwards: they were received with delight by this gentle gentleman. His favourite service experience was air-dropping food to the starving Dutch just as the war was ending. This was typical of him, willingly helping other people including the Heritage Society, whose committee-meetings were always enhanced by his presence. We all have memories of "Special" people and Malcolm is indelibly marked in mine.

I.M.H.

MARJORIE LINKLATER MEMORIAL AWARD

It is hoped that the Marjorie Linklater Memorial Award is to take the form of an essay written by pupils in the senior forms of Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy. They would be submitted to a judging committee by the Heads of the English Departments in each school. Marjorie's daughter Sally, and the Headmasters of both schools have expressed interest, but details have yet to be finalised.

ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY LOCAL HISTORY PROJECTS FEREDAY PRIZE 1996 - 1998

The Heritage Society's History Projects form part of the Class 2 History Curriculum at Junior High Schools, Kirkwall Grammar School and Stromness Academy. The Society is very pleased with the large number and high quality of the entries for the last three years. Judging so many good projects on such varied original subjects is no easy matter.

One disappointment this year is that no entries were received from Junior High Schools, but it is hoped that the island schools will enter again in the future. Often the best entries do not depend on access to the Library or Archives, but draw on rich family sources such as the memories of parents and grandparents. Such a one is this year's winning entry.

Prizewinners for 1996

First Prize went to **Robert Learmonth** of **Stromness Academy**, for an excellent history of **Gairsay** spanning the period from **Sweyn Asleifsson** to the present day. The project was beautifully illustrated by drawing and photographs.

Second Prize went to **Allan J. Bruce** of **Kirkwall Grammar School** for a very comprehensive survey of "Growing and Harvesting Crops in Deerness", from 1900 onwards.

Third Prize was awarded to **Inga Wallace** for "The Life of Jack Wallace", the moving story of her grand-uncle who, as a young Eday boy, went off to the 1914-1918 war but, like so many of his generation, did not return.

Highly Commended :-

Kim Anderton
Kirsty Balfour
Louise Bevan
Mandy Byers
Laura Foulis
Craig Horne

Sam Jones
Anna Laughton
Steven Miller
Dana Norquoy
Rachael Oaks-Richard
Melissa Sinclair

Mary Sparrow
Maggie Teasdale

Scott Tulloch



In Addition 24 "Commended" certificates were awarded.

Prizewinners for 1997

First Prize went to **Laura Aitken** of **Kirkwall Grammar Sshool** for an excellent 'Directory' listing and describing the many shipwrecks round the shores of Deerness

Second Prize went to **Laura Moffat** of **Kirkwall Grammar School** for an account of the outbreak of 'Foot and Mouth Disease' in Orkney in the 1960's

Third Prize went to **Nicolas Balfour** of **Stromness Academy** for a project on Rural Education in Orkney.

Because of the high quality of entries from **North Walls**, it was decided to award a prize for best entry from a Junior High School. This was given to **Christopher Groat** for "The History of J.M.F.Groat & Sons"

Highly Commended :-

Robbie Bain
Robbie Balfour
Kate Ballantyne
Christopher Baxter
Henry Bateman
Sarah Bertram
Aimee Bevan
Kelly Burns
Peter Farrell
Gillian Firth
Laura Garrloch
Naomi Groat
Keith Hartmann
Michael Harvey
Lucy Holt

Gavin Innes
Jenny Ireland
Rachael Jenkins
Lorna Kelday
Catriona Kennedy
Louise MacDonald
Rhona MacInnes
Emma Mc.Dill
Lynn Macrae
Sadie Merriman
Mark Morrison
Inez Moss
Kimberley Porter
Amlee Pottinger
Islay Roberts

Dawn Simison
Dale Slater
Melissa Spence
Alice Thomson

Anne Tierney
Jennie Warr
Ailsa Winterburn
Gareth Wood
Kate Worrall



A further 24 Commended Certificates were awarded.

Prizewinners for 1998

It has been decided to adopt a Very Highly Recommended section as from this year, as the top section is so close in merit.

First Prize goes to **Fiona Isbister** of **Stromness Academy**, who has drawn on families and records to produce an outstanding study of the farm of Garth in the parish of Stromness.

Second Prize goes to **Erik Stevenson** of **Stromness Academy** for an interesting account of "Two Orkney Dairies" (Corse and Saverock)

Third Prize goes to **Victoria Laird** of **Kirkwall Grammar School** for her well-presented project on "Businesses of Kirkwall in the Sixties".

Very Highly Commended:-

Neil Manson, Sebay Mill. KGS
Ritchie Laughton, Twenty Years of Radio Orkney. KGS
Tom Pickles, Scapa Bay. KGS
Alison Ritch, Kierfold Farm. SA
Andrew Thomson, Hoxa Batteries KGS
William Scott, What Happened to Kirkwall in World War Two? KGS
Liam Finn, The Effect of the Barriers and World War Two on St. Mary's. KGS
Anon. On the Horizon (Pentland Firth Shipping)
Tracey Linklater, Fire Service KGS
Ingrid Seatter, Orkney Coastal Batteries KGS
Kim MacIver, Sandwick: My Parish SA

Linda Johnston, Orkney Lighthouses SA
 Adam Garrioch, Farming and Food SA
 Ellen Casey, Old Schools in the West Mainland SA



Highly Commended:-

Leah Balfour	Sharon Bertram
Kevin Sinclair	Nicola Stanger
Gina Sinclair	

A further 18 Commended certificates were issued.

Each year copies of the best entries are deposited in the Archives (provided the entrant agrees) where they may be seen by anyone who is interested. Over the years they have become a useful source of information on all sorts of subjects.

It has been decided that because of pressure of space due to having to publish three year' results, no project will be published in full in the Newsletter this year, but it is hoped to rectify this by creating a separate publication with selected projects.

W.P.L.T.

.....
HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR ORKNEY CHICKS ?

Chicks to choose from: Curlew, Eider duck, Great black-backed Gull, Guillemot, Kittiwake, Lapwing, Oyster catcher, Red Grouse, Shelduck, Snipe. *(Answers are on page 16)*

Your answers:	NOW do you know their teu-neems?
I	I
II	II
III	III
IV	IV
V	V
VI	VI
VII	VII
VIII	VIII
IX	IX
X	X

Julie Gibson-Our Archaeologist.

I have been asked to give you a little description of myself and my work before and after I took over from Raymond Lamb, who after eighteen years in Orkney left the Heritage Society to go to Thurso. He is now employed by Thurso College, where he is putting his years of experience in Orkney to good use, developing and teaching parts of the Environment and Heritage Degree for the University of the Highlands and Islands.

I have been working in Archaeology in Orkney for many years. I arrived in 1977 when, as a student from University College, London, I dug at the still unpublished Viking cemetery at Westness, Rousay. Strange as the circles of life are, The National Museum are using the very stones thought to have edged one of these graves, to recreate an oval grave in the Viking Gallery in the new National Museum, together with the rest of the grave goods from Westness. I feel very strongly that centralist tendencies should be resisted!

Obtaining my degree in Medieval Archaeology, and with a smattering of Old Norse, I worked as a freelance archaeologist, also becoming the Manager and Secretary of the old Rousay Processors Ltd for a couple of years and marrying a Rousay man. We have two daughters.

The Ro-Ro ferry arriving and the girls getting bigger, I took up the job of being Historic Scotland's first monument warden in the isles. I saw it as a useful educational experience - and it has been endlessly so. Not only did I get round nearly all the scheduled Ancient Monuments in Orkney- happily being paid to go to exotic places such as Auskerry, and the Holm of Papay, but I indulged in wonderful home-baking, and met many lunatic sheepdogs.

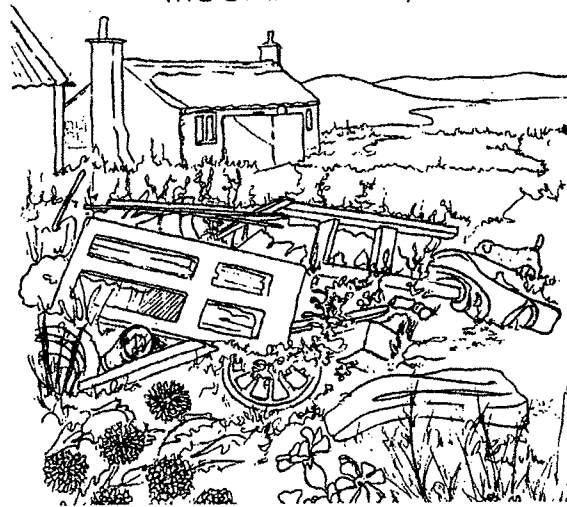
While still freelancing, I took a contract commissioned by Orkney Enterprise that involved looking at archaeology in the isles from the point of view of 'development for Tourism'. During a break at this time, I identified the Scar boat grave as such. I was also working for Raymond who was trying to develop an efficient and routine method of recording the county's eroding archaeology, by means of video, sketches and slides.

I am determined, as the archaeologist for Orkney, to put the basic record system to rights. In Raymond's early days, his system was the best in Scotland, but his equipment gradually became out of date. With a generous grant from Historic Scotland and Orkney Islands Council I have

been able to commission consultant archaeologist Matilda Webb and computer expert Mike Rains from the York Archaeological Trust, to determine the best possible system and database for our needs. I can now say that we are proud owners of an excellent and very flexible system which in future years will allow us to put on specialist data bases. Jane Downes has already supplied the information on Bronze-age burial mounds and, thanks to David Fergusson, wrecks will be the next job to be tackled. After that, wartime and croft specialities,.....in Orkney the mammoth task has just begun!

PROJECT for the THIRD MILLENNIUM

(START YOUR FARM
MOUND NOW !)



LINKS WITH ORKNEY COUNTRYSIDE COMMITTEE

As this Newsletter proves, the interests of the Heritage Society are quite diverse and its involvement with Orkney Countryside Committee is just that. The Committee consists of representatives from over a dozen local organisations who meet four times a year. Some of its objects are to consider matters relating to the provision, development and improvement of facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside, together with the conservation and enhancement of its natural beauty, to advise the Development, Planning and Control Committee of the OIC on general countryside policy and to act as a sounding board of local opinion and concern on any local projects.

I see myself as a person who liaises between OHS and this committee, which in turn helps some of the other organisations where support is often welcomed. Having been delegated this interesting duty more than twenty years ago, I have seen many projects come into fruition. Over the last few years the Committee have dealt with the establishment of some rights of way and are currently continuing with this. Lots of paths, walks and access ways to places of interest, many of them directly associated with archaeological sites and supported by OHS, have been created. The popularity of these has been shown by some already requiring upgrading, e.g. the route to the Old Man of Hoy. One in the pipeline for next year is the path on Wideford Hill leading to the Chambered Cairn. Advising on the format of interpretation material at various locations and discussing ideas to improve the status of Orkney to prospective tourists often takes lots of discussion. Also time taking are interesting discussions relevant to the future of our islands such as the use of local seeds, planting suitable trees, the growing of bere, with its strong Orkney links, road-verge cutting, and the best use of the splendid amenities at Bossack Quarry to dispose of litter which causes an eyesore round the county.

The Committee have been quite involved with kick-starting the OIC into action on the big issue of local biodiversity plans and the associated Agenda 21 contents and proposals. They have been consulted widely by OIC on proposals regarding various plans for the development of both rural and urban areas, with reference to the siting and design of buildings, services and amenities which would be beneficial to various bodies, along

with many other similar issues, such as the siting of fish farms along our unique coastlines. Giving weight to the now first class shipping services must surely have been a big bonus to those throughout the islands who currently enjoy them.

There have been disappointments too, such as the Keep Orkney Tidy scheme which doesn't appear to have had a very lasting effect when one looks around, and Orkney losing out on its claim a few years ago, to be named as an Environmentally Sensitive Area.

So I could go on, but our Editor has laid down restricting parameters. If this meets with the approval of readers, a more definitive column could become a feature of any future Newsletters.

A. Tulloch

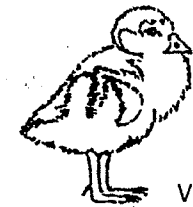
Stromness Museum by Peter Leith

The oldest Society in Orkney (except the Kirk and the Masons) is feeling its age. The Stromness Museum, built 140 years ago, is in need of updating. When it was first built, the ground floor was the Town Hall and upstairs was the museum. In 1929 the whole building was taken over by the Museum. Last year the roof was renewed and now the upstairs floor must be strengthened. On inspection it was found that the beams were showing signs of strain and must be attended to. The upstairs has been closed for safety reasons.

When the major job of strengthening the floor is being done the whole museum will have to be closed for some months - during the winter we hope. At this time we anticipate dealing with some other matters as well. Access for wheelchairs is planned as well as improved toilet facilities and better heating.

The Museum got a special commendation in the prestigious Hydro Electric Annual Scottish Museum of the Year Award Scheme for the Pilot's House extension and at a dinner the Trustees thanked Bryce Wilson, the curator, Jim Park and Tom Muir for their skill and work in this project. The summer exhibition this year is to be "Oradians in the Great War". It will contain personal stories of people who were there. Among many donations received is a painting of the Longhope lifeboat T.G.B. out at sea in rough weather to aid the Stromness fishing boat Desire off Hoy on 27th March 1963.

Membership subscription is £4.00 for adults, £6.50 for a couple or £8.00 for a family. Pensioners and the unwaged can become members for £2.00 and those of school age for £1.00.



References: Illustrations drawn from The Reader's Digest Book of British Birds and the Ten-neems from pages 109-111 of The New Orkney Book

ANSWERS TO CHICKS' QUIZ: I. RED GROUSE II. CURLEW III. GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL IV. OYSTER CATCHER V. SHELDUCK VI. KITTIWAKE VII. GUILLEMOT VIII. SNIFE IX. LAPWING X. EIDER DUCK
 TEU-NEEMS:
 I. MUIR HEN II. WHAAP, WHAUP III. BAKIE IV. SKELDRO, SCOTIE V. SLY GOOSE VI. KITTIK, KITTIWAAK VII. AAK VIII. HORSE-GOUT IX. TEBACK X. DUNTER.

Chicks' names and Teu-neems

News from Tankerness House by Anne Brundle



Orkney Museums' Service collections increased by almost 50% in 1997, mostly by the addition of assemblages from the archaeological excavations at Pool and Toftsness in Sanday, the Point of Cott and Rapness in Westray, St Boniface Kirk in Papay and Sandfield in Sandwick. All of these were allocated to Tankerness House Museum through the Finds Disposal Panel.

In the past thirty years there have been some sixty excavations in Orkney. The collections from most of these are now in Tankerness House. The greater part of the material is pottery, bone, shell and other environmental samples, all with great information potential for specialists, but definitely not for exhibition! Artefacts from the collections will be included in the museum displays as part of the continuing process of refurbishment, when reports and information about them become available. Orkney benefits enormously from the attention of so many skilled archaeologists.

The recently opened Medieval Gallery has been praised by visitors, and work on the next gallery, 'Merchant Lairds', is in progress, aided by money from the National Lottery. In the winter the museum received a generous gift of pictures from the dispersal of the Scottish Arts Council collections, which was shown this spring as an exhibition entitled 'The Gift'. The range of temporary exhibitions mounted by the Museums Service is demonstrated by the variety of summer exhibitions, from 'Vikings' and the Skaill hoard in 1997 to the Arts and Crafts Movement and Melsetter House in 1998.

1997 was a very busy year, with many local and visiting researchers taking time to tell the Society about their work. Subjects varied from the Stone Age, back to the earliest post-glacial, forward again to the Vikings and through the historic period up to Kirkwall Grammar School in the 1960s. We are very grateful to all our speakers.

Some of our Speakers and their Subjects.

- Philip Astley from our Archive's Office - Archives.
- James Barrett from the University of Toronto - Norse Earls and the Fishing Industry.
- Professor Kevin Edwards of Sheffield University - Environmental Archaeology.
- Professor Michael Barnes of University College London - Norse Runes in Orkney.
- Dr. Olaf Cuthbert - Bishop Robert Ried
- Dr. Donald Patterson from Aberdeen University - Who owns our Heritage? Who owns our Past?
- Mr Willie Thompson - Birsay in the Rentals.

A Fairy Palace on the Edge of the Northern Seas.

The centenary of Melsetter House is being celebrated this year by being made the focus of the main summer exhibition at Tankerness House Museum from Saturday, 28th March until 3rd October.

The architecture of Melsetter House was very much influenced by the principles of the Arts & Crafts Movement. May, the daughter of William Morris, was friend of Thomas and Theodosia Middlemore who bought the old Mansion of Melsetter on Hoy. W.R. Lethaby was chosen as their architect and he incorporated part of the original building in his new design.

It was May Morris who described the House as a fairy palace when she visited the Middlemores in 1902. Many of the original furnishings are still in place in this fully restored house and the exhibition at Tankerness uses photographs, together with furniture and fabrics and a model, to tell the story of the house and its inhabitants.

I.E.H.

The New Gallery by Janette Thomson

A medieval gallery? When you think of Orkney it's Skara Brae, Vikings and Picts which usually spring to mind. Nevertheless, the new medieval gallery (opened in March 1997) is the latest stage in a chronological expansion of the museum. Developing new galleries for A-listed buildings such as Tankerness House has its problems as the external features and structure of the building cannot be altered. The designer, Jim Clark, is well aware of the difficulties that can arise but as he is also responsible for the creation of the other galleries in the museum a certain "in-house" style has developed to cope with these problems. This particular section of the house was used as the curator's flat in the 1970s, the frosted glass on the middle window shows where the bathroom was situated. The ascent into the gallery brings you into a light airy space, much becoming the mainly religious theme. What could have been a bland rectangular space is divided by three free-standing wall sections, placed at different angles, which invites exploration and discovery.

The view looks directly onto the medieval cathedral of St Magnus. On the deeply recessed window sills sit chunks of red sandstone showing the masons' marks of some of the men involved in its construction. A piece of text placed between two of the windows starts with the eye-catching phrase: "Suppose you were looking at this view in 1300 - you would be clinging to the rigging of a ship!" It then goes on to explain that there used to be steps to the sea from the west door of the cathedral and Tankerness House is built on what used to be the harbour.

The information panels are all bright, eye-catching and clear to read with a good balance of pictures, diagrams and text. The story of St. Magnus's martyrdom, including a photograph of his skull showing the fatal axe blow, leads on to the remains of the tomb of Bishop Thomas Tulloch. The Tomb, when it was in the cathedral, was famous for being the place in Kirkwall where legally binding business contracts and debts were resolved.

Although the limitations of a listed building have been thoughtfully dealt with, one drawback is the steep angle of the stairs making access quite

difficult for the elderly or disabled. This new gallery reveals the medieval period in Orkney which was hitherto in the hazy area between the Viking Earls and the Stewart Lordship. All in all the medieval gallery at Tankerness House is quite an impressive effort from the smallest authority museum in Scotland.

I.E.H.



VII

The Mermaid Bride, and other Orkney Folktales.

A new book on Orkney folklore will be on sale from 16th April, 1998. Called *The Mermaid Bride, and other Orkney Folktales* it has been written by Tom Muir and illustrated by Bryce Wilson. The stories, over 70 in total, have been gathered by Tom over a period of five years. They are all the folktales that can be found, though there will be others in obscure publications and still others that have never been recorded. Some of the stories will be familiar to the reader, though many are less well known, and there are quite a few that are published here for the first time. The tales range from stories about mermaids, selkie folk, trows, giants, and other supernatural creatures. The book is hoped to serve two important functions. Firstly, it is meant to entertain readers of all ages, and the wonderful illustrations help to bring the stories to life. Secondly it is hoped to spark interest in Orkney folklore, leading to the study of the subject on an academic level. The detailed sources of the stories in the back of the book will lead researchers to the original tales, though they are no way altered in this book.

Orkney Wireless Museum.

Jim MacDonald, was born and brought up in St. Margaret's Hope. World War two took him to Lyness as an Electrician, and it was during this time that he started to collect old or interesting wireless sets and equipment.

Encouraged by friends he decided to make the collection available to the public. He adapted part of his old home in St. Margaret's Hope, and "An Orkney Wireless Museum" was born.

Officially opened on 24 June 1983. Jim knew what he wanted to do with his collection. As he said in the Museum Booklet, it was named "An Orkney Wireless Museum" because it is essentially a local collection, an attempt to capture the evolution and swift passing of an intriguing era. Many will view with nostalgia, and recall the marvels of wireless.... Hopefully, a younger generation will gain a little knowledge and a better understanding of that part of their inheritance". He looked forward to his retirement, to a time when he could put his skills and knowledge into rationalisation, restoration, and presentation of his collection. This alas was not to be. In 1987 he learnt that he had cancer. He was anxious that the Museum should continue. One of his sons - Peter - undertook the responsibility of continuing the task. Clearly Peter could not carry the load alone. A Charitable Trust was set up in 1990. The Trustees being Peter and his 3 brothers plus 3 others. Incidentally the Museum is now called "Orkney Wireless Museum", and achieved National Registration as a Museum in 1994.

In St. Margaret's Hope, after Mrs. MacDonald senior died, staffing difficulties made opening in the summer months a serious problem. It soon became apparent that the house had to be sold. The Trustees had to consider finding new premises. In 1996 premises at the Kiln Corner, Kirkwall, which had been occupied by "Millers" became vacant. This seemed singularly appropriate as many of the early wirelesses had been bought there. A lease, at a commercial rate, was negotiated with entry in January 1997. After a colossal amount of work to meet the requirements laid down to meet National Registration it opened in April, and remained open until September thanks to volunteer staffing from the support organisation "The Friends of Orkney Wireless Museum", (founded in 1991.), and many other people who were prepared to give

up their free time to man the Museum on a 3 hour half-day rota basis.

The Trustees hope that once again they can raise volunteers to man the Museum during the 1998 season. No working knowledge of radio, or wireless is necessary as there are leaflets and explanatory booklets for public use. If you would like to help, please phone the museum on Kirkwall 871400, and leave a contact number

Some irreplaceable items will be on show this year, such as a German U-boat radio, a set of valves, the invention of which made a considerable contribution to the war effort, and there is also an example of a set which was in the homes of many "Secret Listeners" during the war, and helped break German Secret codes. Come along and view the museum, there is something for everyone, even those uninterested in radio.

A.W.W.



The Wireless Museum at Kiln Corner

Where Lies Bishop Robert Reid?

In the year 1861 a descendant of Adam Blackwood, a nephew of Robert Reid, Bishop of Orkney, wrote to the dean of Dieppe that he had found among family papers that the bishop had been buried in the chapel of St. Andrew, called the Scots Chapel, in the church of St Jacques in Dieppe. He asked for information as to whether there was any memorial to the bishop in the chapel. The answer was that there was not and that the floor was laid and no research was feasible.

In 1870 however restoration of the chapel was being undertaken and on raising the floor five coffins were discovered lying side by side with their occupants undisturbed and in a perfect state of preservation. It was possible to date the burials as belonging to the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century. Four of the coffins were of fir and the fifth of beechwood. The bodies had been placed on their backs with their arms crossed on their breasts, their feet to the east and their heads to the west as was customary in Christian burial. The middle coffin contained the remains of an old man of very venerable appearance whose bald crown contained a few white hairs at the side, with a short grey beard covering the lower jaw.

It was concluded that four of the coffins contained the bodies of the four Scottish commissioners - the bishop of Orkney, the Earl of Casillis, the earl of Rothes and Lord Fleming - who had all died in Dieppe in the year 1558 following their attendance at the marriage of Queen Mary to the Dauphin, the fifth coffin possibly being that of Sir John Colville, who had also died at this time. However Lord Fleming may have returned to Paris and died there, in which case the fifth coffin could have contained the body of one of their retinue.

Why these commissioners should all have died within a short time of one another has never been revealed although poison was suspected. However, there were intervals of some weeks between the deaths, and Bishop Reid had already taken ship for Scotland before the weather forced a return to Dieppe which makes the possibility less likely.

Following the discovery of the coffins the Abbé Cochet, who was inspector of historical monuments of the department of Seine - Inférieure, conclude, without any further evidence, that the bodies were indeed those

of the bishop and his fellow commissioners and had erected a plaque in the chapel as a memorial to Bishop Reid.

Although the appearance of the coffins would suggest that the Abbé's assumption was correct, there remains the possibility that the Abbé was mistaken and that Reid's body was interred in some other unknown location. However, there seems no doubt that his death occurred in Dieppe and it seems fitting that a monument to him should find a place in the principal church of the town whether or not his remains lie beneath that hallowed edifice. During recent repairs and alterations in the church, many of the memorial plaques, including that of Robert Reid, were removed from the chapel walls and the chapel was rededicated to the Immaculate Conception. Unfortunately the whereabouts of Robert Reid's memorial plaque is now unknown and. For this reason, Les Amies du Vieux Dieppe and the church authorities have welcomed the suggestion that a replacement be donated by the people of Orkney to commemorate the greatest Scottish churchman and statesman, who was also Orkney's most eminent bishop.

Olaf Cuthbert.

Publications Sub-Committee

There is now a Publications Sub- Committee which is divided into two parts. The one part consists of Anne Brundle, with William Thomson Phil Astley and Julie Gibson, who help to collate papers gathered for publication. There is a book to be published in May, which is a collection of papers by the following authors:- Peter Anderson, Steiner Imsen, Denys Pringle and Brian Smith. They are on different aspects of Orkney in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the book is named "The New Antiquarian Journal"

The other part is the Newsletter Committee, which consists of Iris Heddle and Hilda Firth, who have prepared this year's magazine.

H.M.F.

The Hall of Clestrain. Birthplace of Dr. John Rae.

When the last of the pirates, Gow, decided to see what booty he could get from the Hall of Clestrain, he raided a farmstead well known to him. In his usual way he made a mess of things, getting next to nothing from this rash action. That farmstead was superceded by what we know as the Old Hall of Clestrain. Its successor was built by Patrick Honeyman who was anxious to have an exquisite laird's house, built in classical lines and incorporating the best architectural details and proportions.

Two side wings, detached from the house, provided stables and a high wall surrounded a garden area. It was all done to impress his contemporaries and to house his family in above-average conditions. As he prospered and finally left Orkney, his estates were administered by his factor John Rae, whose son John was to become our great local hero Dr. John Rae. John Rae the elder and his family then lived at the Hall of Clestrain.

Before John Rae went into medicine he had become a really tough outdoor character. He thought nothing of walking miles with heavy loads in any sort of Orkney weather, sailing in his own boat in foul conditions and becoming a "crack shot" with his rifle. In short he was an outstanding man by any standard. I well remember seeing in St. Magnus Cathedral the lovely memorial to Dr. John Rae when I was brought to Orkney on annual holidays with my parents. I suppose I would have been 7 or 8 years old and was told by my father what a very brave and outstanding man he had been.

My late wife Margot and I bought the Mill of Eyrlund in 1972 from Freddie Muir of Cumminess, Stenness and when we finally moved in, (to the one habitable room) in 1980, Freddie used to come and see how we were getting on. He was sometimes accompanied by his daughter Jean Craigie. I used to tell Jean that I would love to see the old Hall of Clestrain restored and would like to be involved in any restoration of it.

Over the years I tried various routes to get something started but I realized that the vital thing was to have the old buildings re-classified from Class B (as is the Mill of Eyrlund) to class A. This would bring far

more help within reach. The opportunity arose when St. Boniface Kirk in Papa Westray was being saved. I had been deeply involved in fund-raising after Lady Grimond's stroke and we were visited by Mrs. Joscelyn Rendall and a representative of Historic Scotland, Dr. D. Mays.

Stressing the historical and architectural merits of the old Hall, I asked if it could be re-graded and was promptly asked to write to Historic Scotland and plead my case. That was successfully achieved and then the chances of restoration were infinitely better. The Orkney Heritage Property Trust was set up to secure the ownership of the Strynd Houses in perpetuum and we hoped it might also be able to help us get the old Hall of Clestrain restored too.

Ivan and Jean Craigie have been assured for many years that the Heritage Society will do all it can to help them with the restoration. I have always maintained that saving the Hall of Clestrain - the birthplace of Orkney's greatest son, was the objective. **It still is the objective.** The Orkney Heritage Property Trust will help the Craigie family to obtain the financial aid which is vital and they, in their turn, are willing to give the public access to the Hall of Clestrain at mutually agreed times. The process is on the move. We can now all work together to achieve the vision.

Ian M.Heddle. Nov. 1997.

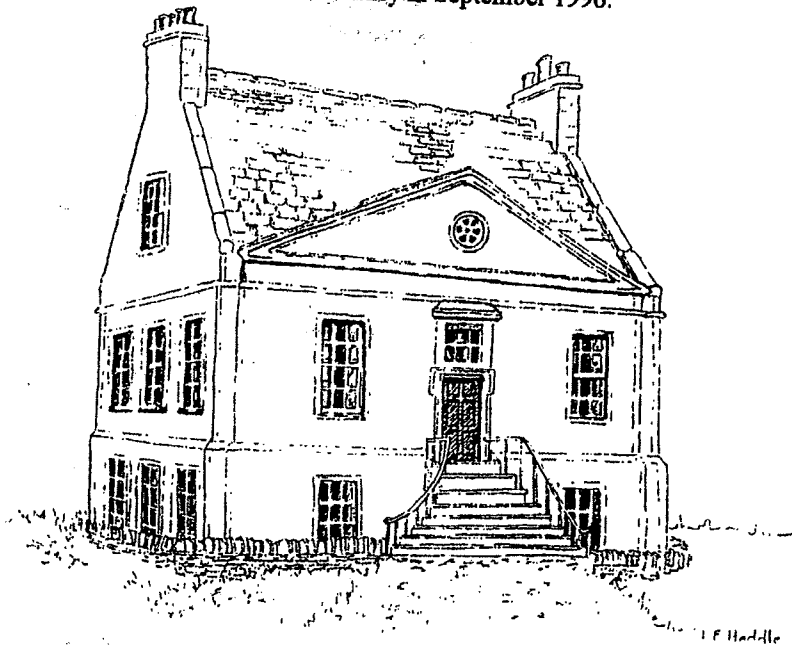
Laura Grimond Memorial Award

The Laura Grimond Memorial Award is to be an illuminated manuscript which will be presented every second year for features of architectural excellence. Magnus Grimond indicated that the family would like new buildings to be included in the scheme. Jeremy Baster has agreed to be one of the adjudicators.

The Hamilton Association for the Advancement of Literature, Science and Art

"John Rae holds a special place in the Hamilton Association since, in 1857 while living in Hamilton, he was instrumental in establishing the Association and was its first vice-president and its second president. As a special project the Association has set up a committee to assist in the collecting of funds for the restoration of Dr. Rae's original home. The restored house should serve to strengthen the links between Orkney, the Canadian Arctic and Hamilton."

Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Green came from Hamilton, Ontario to visit Orkney in May of 1997. They are members of the Executive Council of the Hamilton Association and were very keen to meet Ivan and Jean Craigie and to see the Hall of Clestrain. Pat's delightful sketch of the building is on the front cover of the Association's lecture programme for 1997-98. The above quotation was taken from the copy that was sent to Sandy Firth. He had met Dr. Stephen Threlkeld, a Past President of the Association, on his visit to Orkney in September 1996.



Hall of Clestrain

(artist's reconstruction)

Ness Battery Stromness by Gordon Linklater

Part 1:- 1914 - 1918 At the outbreak of war in 1914 defences to protect the British Fleet anchorage of Scapa Flow were hurriedly erected by Royal Marines. To protect the western approach to Scapa Flow, a number of guns were installed at Ness on the outskirts of Stromness and manned by a mixture of Royal Marines and Territorials from the Royal Garrison Artillery (T.A.) This battery consisted of a number of 12 pounders, 5" and 6" guns plus searchlights covering the western approach from Hoy to Breckness on the Mainland. The heavier 5" and 6" guns were mainly manned by the R.G.A. (T.A) and the 12 pounders spread out from the point of Ness to the Grid Ref. of the present day Ness Battery. Nothing exciting happened at Ness battery in the 1914-18 war except that on the initial firing, the guns jumped out of their mountings! Over hasty installation meant that the Orkney R.G.A. had to have them mounted securely.

In 1917 more Royal Marines were posted to Orkney, and took command of all the British Fleet defences. This resulted in a number of the Orkney R.G.A., mainly officers, transferring to the marines, the remainder being dispersed, with many being sent to France. Marines manned the whole Ness battery, some settled in Orkney after the war, and married locals. The heavy 5" and 6" gun emplacements can still be seen contributing massive hazards to golfers on the course, and causing many unseemly expletives as balls bounce off them or drop into underground holes.

Part 2:- Ness Battery (Grid Ref. HY2486 0796) In 1938 Britain was awakening to the threat of war, and by the time of the Munich Crisis, a new Ness Battery a few yards up the hill from the old one was well under construction. Being built in peacetime, more attention was paid to it being a substantially finished battery. Royal Marines installed two 6" guns, and searchlights were placed along the shoreline. All this, meant that the 191 Heavy Battery R.A.(T.A.) and the Orkney Fortress Royal Engineers (T.A.) could practise their skills on guns and searchlights respectively. When war came in 1939, only two batteries in Orkney were ready for action, Ness Battery, and Stanger Head Battery in Flotta. Ness Battery had a splendid panoramic view of the western approach to Scapa Flow, covering a wide arc from the Kame of Hoy to

the Black Craig. The effective range of guns being approx. 10 miles, and the high situation meant that any vessel attempting to enter Hoy Sound would be easily covered, engaged, and disarmed before imposing any threat.

A small battery, called Links Battery due to its proximity to the golf course, and armed by 6 pounder twin guns, was built half a mile from Ness Battery. In tandem with a similar battery at Skerry in Hoy, it covered the inner approaches of Hoy Sound.

Old Soldiers stationed at Ness say that life was a bit monotonous, with little happening, everlasting lookout duties, and very occasional practise firing. One man, a Devonian with an artistic streak, in his off-duty time, painted the inside walls of the Mess Hall to represent an English garden, using the existing inside of the windows as if they were the outside wall of a house. The layout of the flowers was startling and really brightened the whole hall. On one end wall, he painted a stage with steps apparently leading up to a platform, fooling many people into trying to mount them only to find they were non-existent.

One incident early in the war taught those in charge about the strong tidal currents round the islands. A small cargo ship was spotted entering the western approaches, was challenged and failed to reply. A shot was fired across her bows warning her to hove to. Failure to obey caused live ammo. to be fired, until it was realised that it would have been dangerous for such a small vessel to stop or turn in the strong rip tide. The ship was identified as Belgian, whose master had little English.

Only one accident marred the story of Ness Battery, and that was during its construction in March 1939. A lorry carrying workmen employed by the civilian contractor H.M. Murray of Glasgow toppled from the road which approached along the shore, and crashed on to the rocks below sadly killing a young married Stromnessian, James Laughton. Seven or eight men suffered lesser injuries. No other incidents are recorded.

After the war, the local Territorial Army was re-formed, and Ness Battery was used for weekend training. Accommodation was first class, with all amenities. Frequently Stromnessians would be alarmed by gun fire, firstly with the 6" guns (sub-calibre) and later by the 3.7 A.A. guns, and less often by the rattle of small stens., sterlings, and revolvers. Many large groups, bands etc. used the accommodation, often at Stromness Shopping Week, and it is still viable. What will become of this valuable part of our heritage - a visitor site, - a museum? Time will tell.

Orkney Traditions of Dance by Mats Melin

There is a re-awakening of the old Orkney dances underway. For the past year or so I have been actively working towards setting up an Orkney Traditional Dance Project. Why? You may ask. Well, traditional is often taken for granted until one finds that no one is left that can remember how the old fashioned dances were done, and that nobody even thought of asking how they were done while the tradition bearers were still around.

I have previously lived and worked in Shetland and in Sutherland where several projects were set up with the aim to preserve and encourage the old traditional dances of each respective area. Having had a very long interest in Orkney, its history and traditions, it seemed obvious to me that a similar project could be set up here as well. I was delighted to learn about the small but thriving dance groups that meet up on Rousay, Stronsay and Papa Westray, to name but a few. Speaking to local musician Edwin Flaws, about the declining number of musicians who can play for the old dances and in the rapid decline of those who can actually remember the dances themselves, I decided, in late 1996, to set out to create an Orkney Islands Traditional Dance Project. I acquired funding from the Scottish Arts Council, but then found it difficult as an individual to find additional funding actually to launch the project. So in February 1998 I took the step to call a public meeting in Kirkwall with the aim to set up an Orkney Traditional Dance Association (OTDA). I had great support from Councillor Howie Firth as well as Rousay dance enthusiasts Itha and Edwin Flaws, and Wilma Taylor from Kirkwall among many others. I was delighted to see that as many as thirty people turned up on a foul night for the meeting, and the result was that the OTDA was formally formed. The aims of the OTDA are as follows:

- To preserve the traditional dances of Orkney.
 - To set up an archive of these dances for posterity.
 - To encourage the sustained development and preservation of traditional dance in Orkney.
 - To increase awareness of the social context of dance and its links with traditional music
- If any of the Orkney Heritage Society members have any memories,

anecdotes or other information regarding Orkney dancing, past or present, please get in touch with the OTDA at Westness House, Rousay, Orkney KW17 2PT.



VIII

SHAPINSAY HERITAGE CENTRE

This is located in the Smithy, Balfour Village, and is open seven days a week in summer. It houses a fascinating collection of old photographs gathered originally in the days of the Manpower Commission. There are also many books and other artefacts to remind one of days gone by. A very active committee meets monthly and they have bought a video camera to record music and dancing etc. for preservation. There is a cafe, and shop full of tempting craft work on the premises.

SHAPINSAY MACHINERY RESTORATION CLUB

An Englishman happily settled in the island, a few years ago, was given a present of a Lister Engine from Sanday, which he stripped down and totally refurbished to working order. He was joined by a local man, another enthusiast, and they now have a flourishing club, with two lady members-and why not? They have a regular newsletter, and 38 members, who will restore any given engine, pump or machinery, not for any gain, but for the good of the island. Recently, among many other gifts, they have been given a mill built on Shapinsay. They intend to have their first showing of engines at the island's Agricultural Show in August. Well worth a trip!



IX

St Magnus Church Remains in Birsay by S. Zabriskie.

After Earl Magnus Erlendsson was murdered, his body was brought to Birsay and was buried in Christ Church. Soon after he became associated with miracles and began to be 'revered as a saint and martyr'. His canonization took place 20 years after his death. After completion of the magnificent cathedral built in his honour by his nephew Earl Rognvald (Kali Kolsson), his bones were transferred there and enshrined. Birsay still retained their connection with the Saint with their Mansie's Well and the old church. Though there was a difference of opinion as to whether the site of Christ Church was at the Palace or on the Brough, most historians now feel that the weight of evidence strongly favours St. Magnus Church. The red sandstone foundations, clearly visible when the church was restored in the 1980's, showed that there had been a church of great importance on the present site of St. Magnus for over 900 years.

Several times in the past this small parish church has been faced with closure. Each time the Birsay folk rallied and saved their historic church. Once again in 1996 it faced closure. The Church advised that they no longer could afford the maintenance of two churches and a choice must be made. When Twatt Church was chosen for Birsay, the local people decided that a way must be found of keeping St Magnus Church open. Fortunately for them, the present minister, the Rev, Graeme Brown, was a far-sighted and progressive man. He thought about what those in Papa Westray had achieved at St Boniface Kirk by joining a Trust, and decided it might work in Birsay. So he presented his plan to the elders then to the congregation and was requested to proceed. He approached the Church of Scotland with his novel idea of having the Church give St. Magnus Church to a Trust which would be responsible for its fabric and maintenance. It agreed. A Trust was set up, all the legal steps were taken and St Magnus Church was saved. **April 16, 1997, (St. Magnus Day) saw the inauguration of the St Magnus Church Birsay Trust.** It was celebrated in the church with a service of psalms, and was attended by many people from organisations in all parts of Orkney, including St Boniface Kirk. The Inaugural Statement was delivered by the Moderator of the Presbytery Rev. Dr. Frank Bardgett with these words: "The General Trustees of the Church of Scotland have gladly agreed to

transfer St. Magnus Church Birsay into the care of a locally established Trust and the Presbytery of Orkney and Kirk Session of Birsay Parish have also unanimously agreed to this transfer of ownership." In honour of the inauguration, local artist Harold Stanley, created and presented a very beautiful illumination which now hangs in the church porch, along with a plaque created and donated by sculptor Frances Pelly, at the suggestion of Dr. Barbara Crawford of the University of St. Andrews.

The purposes of the Trust are the preservation of the building for the benefit of the public at large, the provision of reasonable access to the property for the public, to advance Christian Religion and educate the public in the history of St. Magnus Church Birsay. The Trustees shall seek to preserve, maintain, renovate and restore the church.

The Trust has already had many fund raising functions there, beginning with an Advent Celebration by the Mayfield Singers and representatives from Norway in 1996, later followed by a concert by the Strathclyde University Chamber Choir and the Mayfield Singers in 1997. It renovated the Sunday School premises in the Guild Room for a very successful art show by Harold Stanley. Later, it purchased copies of the book "St. Magnus of Orkney", and the author Mike Whittles came to present them to the senior class of the Sunday School. The Sandwick Singers came in October and presented a Gospel Concert. Orkneyinga Silversmiths have created jewellery using a design from a window. As well, the Kirk is still being used on alternate Sundays for regular services.

1998 began with a lecture by Olaf Cuthbert on the former parish minister and naturalist Rev. George Low. Other activities include: a lecture (jointly sponsored by the Birsay Heritage Trust and the Orkney Heritage Society) by Orkney historian Mr. William Thomson on the Birsay Rentals, the celebration of St Magnus Day with a service of psalms, a Jazz Festival, and a music workshop for local students followed by a concert, along with the students of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. As part of the Science Festival, there will be a programme on the life and work of Robert Rendall including a presentation by the Birsay Drama Club. Dr. Barbara Crawford will give a lecture and during the summer there will be a Photographic Exhibition of the old Birsay Photographs in the Guild Room.

Birsay people and friends from near and far have totally supported the Trust. Unfortunately, their efforts are far too numerous to list here, but a cordial invitation is accorded to all to view and rest in this lovely church.

WESTRAY BUILDINGS PRESERVATION TRUST

Westray Buildings Preservation Trust was established in 1994, and has twenty-one trustees. The trust purposes are 1. The maintenance of the buildings in the island of Westray considered to be of importance to the history and heritage of the island. 2. The advancement of the education of the public in the history, geography, wild-life and other features of life in Westray.

Our first project widened our original purposes to providing an exhibition hall and sales outlet for local artists and craft people. An old hall (a school before the Education Act) on an ideal site in the middle of Pierowall village came on the market. This we bought, and it was renovated to provide office, store, toilet and utility areas as well as floor space of approx. 10 sq. m. for sales/teas and 50 sq. m. for display/exhibition.

The permanent display was created by local sisters Lizza and Jenna Hume and depicts our natural heritage. A special feature is the 10' high model of a geo, complete with birds and the sounds, but not the smell. Last year our historical display was on the Westray schools. All the photos collected can still be seen, as can more than 1000 other black and white photos of people, places and events.

This year, 1998, Noup Head Lighthouse is 100 years old, so our display will feature it and other lighthouses which have Westray connections.

The Heritage centre will be open 2 - 5p.m. daily from early May to late September.

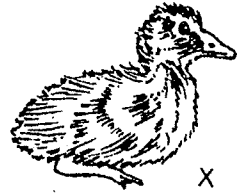
Meanwhile, the Trust has purchased the houses and yard of the croft, South Hammer. Some immediate work is necessary to stop further weather damage. Thereafter plans for renovation/refurbishment will be made and it will be restored, probably to what it looked like in the 1930's. When it is complete, some time from now, we will be able to display larger items. We are glad to have Paul Newman's expert advice on old farm buildings.

So often, everything comes back to money, and we do always need to raise more. To this end, we have published an A5 copy of "Westray's Heritage" - the A3 book on display in the Centre. A postcard of the Geo has been printed, and also six blank cards showing portions of the permanent wall panels. With the help of information from the R.S.P.B..

we have published a pocket-sized guide to Westray Birds. Profits from "Wullie o' Skipigeo", and "Orkney Dialect Tales" by C.M. Costie, and some other small publications such as E.T.Cooper's memories of World War 1, also go to the Trust Funds.

Thanks to the loan of £500.00 from the Orkney Heritage Society we were able to stay afloat last year, when we had long gaps between paying bills and repayment of grants.

Nancy Scott



Birsay Heritage Trust

Birsay is intent on being doubly sure of preserving its heritage. The Boardhouse Mill, on which we carried a letter in 1984 by George Scarth, is now largely the reason for the formation of the Birsay Heritage Trust. Its Chairman is Sandy Scarth, son of the aforementioned. Among other things, this Trust is hoping to preserve the Control Tower at Twatt aerodrome.

E.B.

Members List

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Appleby, Mrs.Sigrid
 Bain, Mrs. E.A.
 Bain, Miss Thora
 Ballin-Smith, Mrs.B
 Bevan, Mr.&Mrs.A.
 Boyes, Prof. & Mrs. John
 Brundle, Mrs. A.
 Burgher, Leslie J.
 Cant, Dr. Ronald
 Carter, Miss. G.M.M.
 Clark, B.M.
 Cooper, Miss Ivy
 Cowie, Mrs.Maureen
 Crawford, Mrs. B.
 Croy, Mrs. Inga,
 Cuthbert, Drs. O.& M.
 Dunnet, Mr. Bruce,
 Early, Mrs. D.
 Eunson, Mrs. W.
 Fereday, Dr. Ray
 Firth, Mr. & Mrs. A.J.
 Firth, Dr. Nigel,
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 Flint, Mrs. S.
 Foubister, Mrs, Hazel
 Gibson, Mrs. Julie
 Goar, Mrs. H.
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 Grimond, Magnus
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 Heddle, Miss Mary
 Hicks, Mr. J.
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 Irvine, James M.
 Irvine William,
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Johnstone, Dr. & Mrs.D.D.
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 Lamb, Dr. Raymond
 Leith, Mr. P.
 Leslie, Mrs. Ruby
 Liddell, Mrs. Agnes
 Lind Mrs. M.M.
 Linklater Mr. G.
 Lorimer, Mrs. D.
 Mackay, Mr. Kevin
 Mackay, Capt. W.B.
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 Marwick, Mrs. Jaqueline
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 Mc. Innes, Mr. & Mrs. Ian
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 Nicolson, Mrs. Rita M.
 Oag, Mrs. I.
 Oddie, Mr. D. & Mrs. R.
 Petrie, Miss.J.C.
 Price, Mr. N.
 Quinn, Mr. C.B.
 Radford, Prof, John
 Ramsay, Mr. & Mrs. W.A.M.
 Ravenshear, Mr. J.F.
 Renfrew, Prof. A.C.
 Robertson, Mr. D.J.T.
 Robertson, Miss E.
 Robertson, Brigadier S.
 Ross, Mrs, Andrewina
 Ross, Brodie
 Scott, Mr. Eoin F.
 Selfridge, Mr, R.E. & Miss A.T.
 Shearer, Mr. A.J.H.
 Shearer, Mrs. H.M.L.
 Simison, Mr.
 Sinclair, Miss. M.T.
 Sincalir, Mr. Roy H.

Skea, Mr. P.G.
 Spence, Mr. & Mrs. J.W.
 Stewart, Alan Mac Gregor,
 Street, Mrs. M.D.
 Sutherland, Miss Margaret,
 Sutherland, Mr. Paul
 Sutton, Mr. E.G.
 Swanney, Mrs. I.M.B.
 Tait, Mr. & Mrs. A.
 Taylor, Mr. Colin J.S.
 Thomson, W.P.L.
 Townsend, Mr. J.A.B.
 Tulloch, Mr. & Mrs. A.
 Tulloch, Mrs. B.J.S.
 Twatt, Mrs. E.
 Wallace, Mrs. A.L.
 Wallace, Mr. & Mrs. D.S.
 Wenham, Mrs. S.B.
 Wilson, Mr. Bryce
 Wishart, Miss Sonja
 Wood, Mr. Marcus
 Work, Miss I.S.
 Wright, Mr. A.W. & Mrs. A.O
 Wylie, Mr. George T
 Zabriskie, Dr. Frank

DUNCAN Mrs. J.A.
 ESSON G.L.
 FARRAR Mr. & Mrs. I
 FLAWS Mr. & Mrs. I.M.
 FODEN Dr. F.
 GEE Christopher
 GODWIN J.P.
 GORIE Mrs. M.B.
 GRAY Mrs. H.P.
 GRIEVE Sarah Jane
 HARRIS Mary
 HAYES Mr. M.R.
 HODGE Mr. & Mrs. D.
 HOURSTON Dr. I. M.
 IRELAND Mrs. Janet E.
 LEASK Mr. Neil
 LESLIE Mr & Mrs R.K.
 MAINLAND T.C.F. & B.M.G.
 MANSON Mrs. H. & Mr. S.
 Mc.CANCE Neil
 Mc.INTYRE Dr. Linda
 MEEK Mr. E.R.
 MOWAT Miss. B.
 NEWMAN Paul. I.
 PALMER Mr. M.A.
 RENDALL Mr. T.
 SPENCE A.B. & S.C.
 SUTHERLAND Paul
 SUTHERLAND-Graeme Miss A.
 THOMSON, James R.
 THORPE M.
 TROUP Mr. J.
 TURNER Rev. T.
 WALKER Dr. J.S.
 WALTHEW Mrs. B.M.
 WATSON Fiona
 WATT James T.
 WATTERS Mrs. Mgt.
 WEBB Matilda
 WELSH A.D. & M.
 WOOD Mr. M.W.T.
 WOOD Norris

Income and Expenditure continued on a similar scale to previous years. The major receipt was as usual the £7,895 received from the ELF Consortium Covenant and from the Tax recovered. This sum was then handed on to the O.I.C. who administers it for us. Interest on the two Abbey National accounts totalled £2,511, and the interest on the two accounts at the Royal Bank of Scotland totalled £821. Covenant and interest represented the major sources of income to the Society. Other sources included Subscriptions, Donations, Members Night's Collections

and profit on the Eynhallow Trip, and together totalled £1,600 inclusive of a £400 donation to the St. Boniface Kirk Restoration Fund.

Expenditure on Advertising, Printing, Insurance, Hire of Rooms, Committee's expenses etc. came to £4,972. Total balances at all the Society's accounts fell by £492 from £76,739 to £76,247 at 31st. August.

Since the end of the last financial year the Elf Consortium Covenant payment has been received, as has the annual Building Society interest. Total so far received amounts to £8,400 to which tax reclaimed is to be added in due course. The major item of expenditure to date has been in the form of a loan of £1,000 as start-up funds to the Neolithic Conference.

Members

ANGUS Helen,
 APPLEBY Andrew
 ARMER Gwenllian
 ASTLEY Phil
 BARTHELMESS Dr. Ilse B.
 BATCHELOR Mr & Mrs. R.E.
 BUCHANAN Mr. S.
 CLOUSTON Mrs. Eve
 COOPER Mrs. M.
 CRAIGIE Mrs. Norma
 DOUGHTY Mr. & Mrs. K.

Birsay Heritage Trust

The Birsay Heritage Trust was born out of necessity. For years the Birsay Community Council had discussed doing something with the Twatt Control Tower and more recently had been prodding the O.I.C. to reopen the Barony Mills all without much success.

The Birsay folk realised that the formation of a trust could help them to achieve their aims and would open doors to outside finance in a way that the O.I.C. and the Birsay Community Council could not. The trust was officially formed on October 9, 1997 when trustees and office bearers were elected and aims were established. The aims of the trust were "the advancement of the education of the public in, and its enjoyment of the, history, culture, natural history and other features of life in the Parish of Birsay". The Inland Revenue requested that the words "its enjoyment of" be deleted. I am sure that in spite of the Inland Revenue the good folk of Birsay will still be able to enjoy themselves.

The first task the Trust set itself was to reopen the Barony Mill as a working mill. In six months much has been achieved. The trust leased the Mill from the OIC; a Master Miller has been appointed; a field has been rented for the growing of bere; display material is being prepared for inside the Mill. As landlords the O.I.C. have been doing essential repairs and maintenance. However, much remains to be done but the trust aims to open the doors to the public on May 1, 1998. The support of the public is essential to keep the mill running and will ensure the continuation of the ancient craft of grinding bere meal in this historic corner of Orkney.

The first event organised by the trust was a joint venture with the Orkney Heritage Trust and the St Magnus Church (Birsay) Trust when William Thomson delivered a lecture on "Birsay in the Rentals". The importance of Birsay in the history of Orkney from earliest times through the days of Earl Thorfinn and the Stuart Earls was well made.

The trust hopes that over the years it will be able to continue to organise events and may, one day, turn the control tower into a war museum.

Sandy Scarth

In this Newsletter we have already acclaimed two Orcadian poets. But there is a third major figure in our literary history to whom we should pay tribute this year, the centenary of his birth. ROBERT RENDALL was born on January 24th, 1898.

We quote again from Archie Bevan who made a study of the three poets Muir, Rendall and Brown. "Robert Rendall had much in common with Edwin Muir and George Mackay Brown. Like them he was deeply attached to the place and the people of Orkney, and he shared their concern for the survival of traditional values in a world increasingly dedicated to material progress. Also, much of his writing - though by no means the best of it - is religious in its inspiration, with a devotional tone which reflects the writer's lifelong commitment to the Open Brethren. Above all, Robert Rendall has that same 'gift of imagination and gift of words' which Edwin Muir recognised in the poetry of George Mackay Brown, and which he himself possessed in such abundant measure."

His first collection of poems "Orkney Variants" contained what GMB described as "marvellous lyrics in Orkney dialect with a Greek form and purity. These were the most beautiful poems written by an Orkneyman since the Reformation killed the songs and ballads of the people."

In the foreward of Neil Dicksons biography "An Island Shore" George writes "Robert Rendall is one of the outstanding Orkneymen of the century. He had a questioning mind that took him across far horizons, and always he returned with full and varied cargoes." George noted "his generosity of spirit," his fascination with the life of the shore and his contribution to conchology; also his interest in archaeology - mentioning "his extraordinary and fortuitous discovery, while painting a picture, of the world-famous Broch of Gurness." He had a "many-faceted mind" of limitless enquiry and "rather late in life he 'took up' literature" and "began to produce poetry of very high quality."

This tribute of one poet to another concludes: "It is time, surely, for this great Orcadian to be recognised and honoured. His like will never be again."

Tankerness House Museum this year has a focus exhibition on Robert Rendall.

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