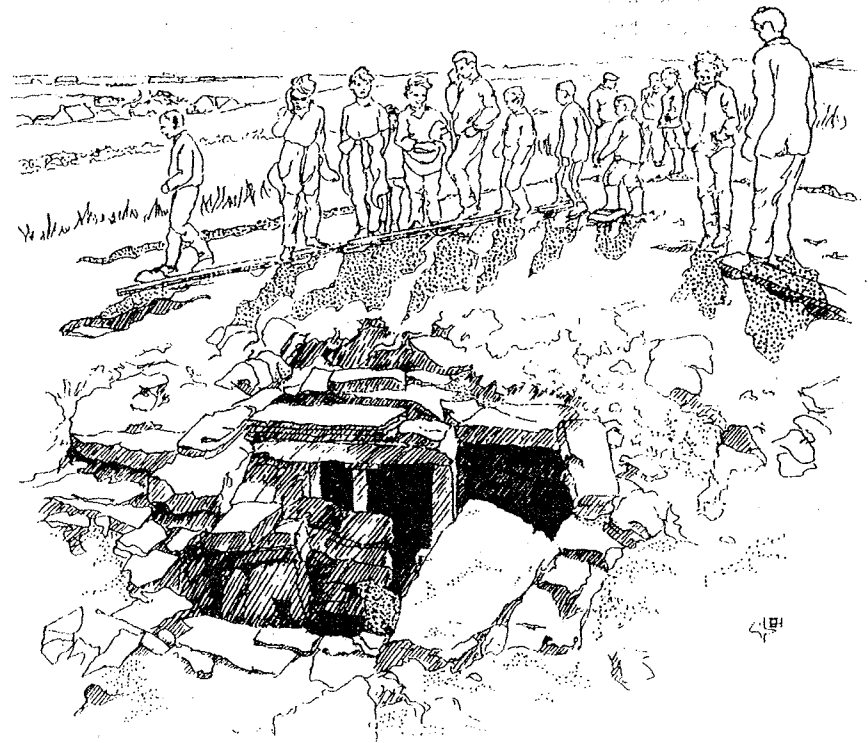




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Orkney Heritage Society



Newsletter 1999

Objectives of the Orkney Heritage Society

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.

Committee

President	Mr.IanHeddle,Cletyan,Ireland Road,Stenness.
Vice President	Mr.Sandy Firth,Edan,Berstane Road,Kirkwall
Chairman	Mrs.Daphne Lorimer,Scorradale, Orphir
Vice-Chairman	Mrs.Anne Brundle,Hillside School, Twatt.
Secretary	Ms.Andi Ross,Outer Dyke, Stenness
Minutes Secretary	Mrs.Sheena Wenham,Langwell,Orphir.
Treasurer	Mr.Neil McCance,West End, Burray.

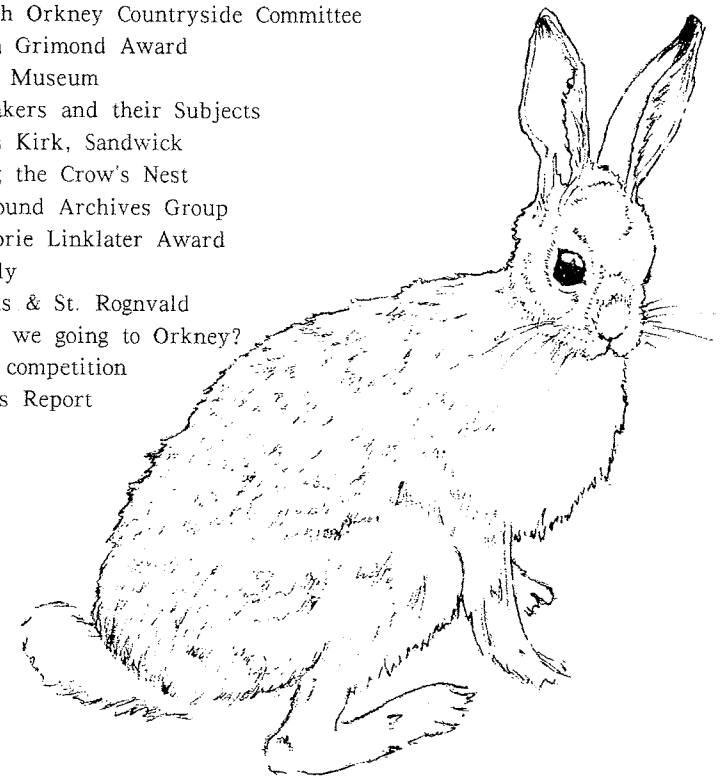
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 Mr.Peter Leith, Langbigging Cottage, Stenness.
 Mr.Maurice Hayes, Summerlea, Burray.
 Mr.Philip Astley, 35A,Albert Street, Kirkwall.
 Mrs.Betty Tulloch,13 Craigiefield Park, St Ola.
 Mr.Paul Newman, Sandesquoy, Tankerness.
 MatildaWebb,Quoybow,CairstonRoad,Stromness
 Mrs.Iris Heddle, Cletyan,Ireland Road,Stenness.

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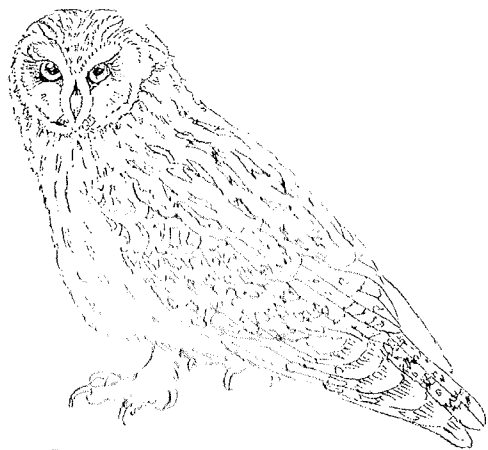


Editorial

This past year may have been unusually wet but, as can be seen from this Newsletter, it has not dampened the enthusiasm of members of the Heritage Society. Unfortunately Orcadians were not able to "Meet the Ancestors" face to face (when the Crantit dig programme was broadcast earlier this year) as what remained of the skulls was insufficient for either a sculptural or a computer graphics reconstruction. However, the open day for the Crantit site was fine and many people took the opportunity of visiting the excavation. We have used a drawing of the day for our cover illustration.

Another archaeological excavation- of seventy years ago at Skara Brae - is also featured and it appears by courtesy of the Orkney Library - Photographic Archive. Dr. Gordon Childe is looking up from one the houses. Does anyone know who the other people were?

As last year, the membership is increasing, and also the attendance at our lectures. Remember that they are free to members. They are advertised on Radio Orkney and in the *Orcadian*, often at short notice. If you have any suggestions for items which should be included in the next publication, please feel free to phone Hilda Firth at 872537 or Iris Heddle at 850988. We hope you enjoy your read.



Message from the Chairman The Neolithic Conference

When the Conference on *Neolithic Orkney in its European Context* took place in September 1998, the Orkney Heritage Society saw the culmination of three years planning and hard work. Despite the vagaries of the Orkney weather (since it was September, that was fog!) the Conference has been hailed as a great success and was much enjoyed by its participants.

The Heritage Society can congratulate itself on a real team effort - not only by the Organizing Committee who left the Chairman awe-struck and admiring, but by the large number of members who chauffeured, stewarded and shepherded with unfailing cheerfulness and aplomb.

Over two hundred people took part in the Conference, of whom thirty-one were speakers (seven from Continental Europe). There were some moments fraught with acute anxiety as when, on the Thursday fog closed in and eight lecturers due to speak on the following morning were stranded on the other side of the Pentland Firth, including three Danes incommunicado in Caithness! We re-scheduled: as when, on Friday, owing to a mis-understanding there was no sound system and a temperamental projector had, ultimately, to be taken to pieces and cleaned by the Vice-President in the small hours. The delegates were, however, forgiving and the superb coffee and home-made biscuits provided, at the refreshment breaks, by the ladies of the East Kirk Guild in the King Street Hall did much to grease the wheels and restore good humour.

In his inaugural address, which was shared with the Science festival, Professor Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorpe set the theme of continuity for the whole conference and impressed the audience with song. His address was followed by a very enjoyable civic reception by Orkney Islands Council in Kirkwall Town Hall. Since the lectures themselves will, we hope, be in print in the Autumn, suffice it to say that the organizers had tried to maintain a balance between "The Old School" and the "Avant-Guard" - not always easy when chosen lecturers have to pull out at short notice,

but some fascinating aspects of the Neolithic were revealed and occasional sparks enlivened the proceedings. The imbalance of the sexes among the lecturers noted by some commentators was the result, not of predilection, but unfortunate unavailability of some chosen speakers.

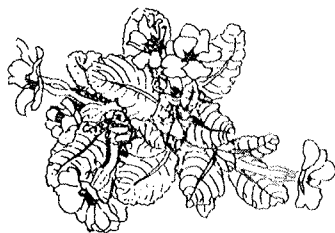
The Field Trips, a triumph of travel organization, were blessed with sunshine and Delegates to the isles returned in a state of Euphoria. It is to be regretted that logistics prevented more members being able to see the more inaccessible of Orkney's gems. The Neolithic Fair and the popular lectures were, however, a huge success, entertaining not only local residents, but delegates, many of whom found food for thought in the demonstrations of neolithic crafts and, if it did nothing else, the tug-of-war with simmens proved that it was an unlikely pastime five thousand years ago!

It was unfortunate that Orkney's largest Dining-room could not house all the delegates who wished to attend the Conference Dinner, but those who did will never forget the wit of Harvey Johnston who brought the house down with his "tribute" to Orkney's off-shore transport companies.

In all, the Conference was academically stimulating, socially memorable and, above all, fun!

Note: The Proceedings are being edited by Dr. Anna Ritchie and published on the proposal of Professor Renfrew and Dr. Chris Scarre, jointly by the Orkney Heritage Society and The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, of Cambridge in their Monograph Series. It is anticipated the Proceedings will appear in the Autumn.

Daphne Lorimer.



The Junior Poetry Competition

As part of the Neolithic Conference a poetry competition for the younger members of the County was run by Orkney Libraries in conjunction with the Heritage Society. Entries were displayed at the Kirkwall Library for the period leading up to the official presentation. It was a most successful venture with many fine poems and we have permission to print the winning entries.



THE STONE CIRCLE

GREY STONES STANDING
CIRCLED ROUND
BY DEEP DITCH AND GRASSY MOUND

FLASHES OF THE SUNLIGHT GLANCING
ON THE ANCIENT FACES DANCING

SACRIFICES TO THE STONES
ASHES AND CREMATED BONES

ASKING FOR THE SUN AND RAIN
TO PROVIDE THEIR HARVEST GRAIN

WILL WE EVER UNDERSTAND
WHAT ONCE HAPPENED IN THIS LAND?

AMANDA MAINLAND
1st Equal - Age group 10+

Silent Witnesses

Witnesses of another age.
How did they come here?
How were they made?
What men laboured to create
This stone circle towering great.
Warriors against the hands of time
Several fallen in their prime.
What a mystery they weave.
What is the legacy they leave?

Jamie Stevenson
P7 Evie Primary School.
1st Equal - Age group 10+

3 Hairy Men

3 hairy men dressed in hairy skins
had no where to live
They got 45 sticks and made a big big
house
out of sticks and stones

They all sat in the house
and wondered what to do
They made a big big fire
with some more sticks
and cooked some fish to eat,
those hairy men in hairy skins.

1st Bryony Palmer
Age group 7 and under

Now or then

Sea shimmers as birds fly over head.
Tribes tremble with pride.
On top of the hill the sun shines
Nine sheep graze in the fields
Eagles swoop and swerve.
Animal smells come from the hill tops.
Ground is firm and sandy
Every thing is quiet its the end
of the day.

1st Joshua Palmer - age group 8-10

STONE AGE

Skin was worn in Stone age times
tribes men marching over the hills
on foot
no fancy things
Eagle sweeping over the sheep
All men making fire
grinding stones
eels for breakfast if you're lucky.

Thorfinn Tait
Highly commended - age group 7 and
under.

Kelpie the Stone age dog

Staring at the stars Kelpie sat alone
chewing,
on his bone outside the Stone age
home.
The bones of a cow from a hard day's
work.
A spare bit of fish will please the
cat and make
her go miaow
But a spare cow bone will please
Kelpie as he eats
it on a stone.

Karen E. Wood. Age group 8-10
Highly commended.

The Boring but Important Bits Archaeologist's Report

by JULIE GIBSON

What a state we were in last year, and how different now! This time last year the Sites and Monuments Record was accessible only by reading the old index cards, and we were very grateful that ELF consortium had just agreed to renew the covenant to ensure that the archaeologist could remain in employment. I had taken a chance on finding funding and sent Matilda Webb off on a Scotland-wide tour to look at the best of the other systems. Since when, with OIC and Historic Scotland funding for initial work and hardware (phew!) she has been instrumental in sorting the whole thing out. We now have a good system up and running. We have grant applications to Historic Scotland to continue this work next, catching up on our 10-year backlog, so fingers crossed!

On the active Conservation front, the news is all good: consultations in advance of major refurbishment by HYDRO has led to them being able to avoid all known archaeology, and to commission watching briefs for sensitive areas. This has worked well so far, and no archaeology has been disturbed. Likewise we are liaising now with the North of Scotland Water Authority.

The Countryside Premium Scheme is a government grant scheme paying the owners and occupiers of land to conserve both natural and built heritage. Because of the weight of the "natural" lobby it has never previously been possible to get archaeology included as a priority within the scheme. This year however, Orkney is leading the way, being the only area of Scotland in which archaeology has been identified as a priority. We are working closely with FWAG and SAC to try and make this a success.

The routine application of National Planning Policy Guidelines for archaeology within OIC led to an important prehistoric site being saved on the Brodgar peninsular. As icing on the cake, the plan advanced by Historic Scotland for the "Golden Triangle" sites of Maeshowe, Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and Skara

Brae being made a World Heritage area are well advanced, with the visit of an inspector from UNESCO impending early this year.

Plans for a Post-Graduate course in Professional Archaeology to be run by Orkney College working with the Trust, are advancing. The UHI has approved our course structure, and the College is actively seeking pump-priming money from Orkney Enterprise and the Council in order to get it underway. Certainly if the small sums involved are not available this year, competing areas will reap the benefit, so once again at this time of year we are hoping for the best. Plus ça change!

Oh yes, and a lot of digging went on.

The Neolithic Carvings in Maeshowe

by MATILDA WEBB

As reported in the autumn issue of the Bulletin of the Orkney Archaeological Trust, a number of incised Neolithic carvings were discovered in the tomb of Maeshowe. Professor Richard Bradley of Reading University undertook an extremely successful project to search the tombs of Orkney in the summer of 1998 for such carvings. In Maeshowe, he was assisted by archaeologists Colin Richards and Matilda Webb who spent ten hours in the darkened tomb shining four torches at an oblique angle across the stones - the life of an archaeologist is varied! Most carvings were found in passage type graves, and consist mainly of simple geometric motifs as found in Grooved Ware Pottery.

Professor Bradley gave a paper on his findings in December at the annual Theoretical Archaeology Group conference in Birmingham, followed by an illustrated account which appeared in January's *Current Archaeology*. It is hoped that a more detailed account will be placed in the Cambridge Archaeological Journal. If more funding is obtained, further research is to be undertaken in 1999.

CENTENARIES

1999 is the centenary year of two prominent Orcadians. Colonel H.W. Scarth was born here. World-renowned writer Eric Linklater, although born in Swansea, had an Orcadian father and always regarded himself as an Orcadian.

Eric Linklater

by SALLY LINKLATER-BETLEY

Eric Linklater identified himself with Orkney. No reader of *The Men of Ness* who has accompanied Kol and Skallagrim across the Pictland Firth could deny this. The very title of his early novel, *Magnus Merriman*, appeals to Orkney ears, and the hero of this rumbustious story, which satirises Scottish nationalism, finds all his difficulties resolved by the rhythm of Orkney days.

St. Magnus Cathedral celebrated its 800th anniversary in 1937 with a Pageant, largely designed by Storer Clouston, Eric, who wrote its dialogue, found himself surprised by one of its results. He told a friend that Orkney, at that moment, perceived the reality of its history. Just before the dress rehearsal, half the Pageant's cast, most of them farmers, had disappeared. Found at last, they were swaggering round Kirkwall, showing off their costumes. They actually seemed to have 'become' Vikings, to such an extent, Eric wrote, that 'with three words they'd have sacked the place'.

Since both his father and his grandfather had been sea captains, distant parts always attracted Eric. His *Juan In America*, which became a best-seller, was followed by *Juan in China*, and *Private Angelo*, his 'magnificent anti-war novel', later made into a film, was set in Italy. But *Laxdale Hall*, also filmed, brought him back to Scotland. Its theme, divisions in a small Highland community, is relatively simple; but later novels such as *The Faithful Ally*, *The Dark of Summer* and *Position at Noon*, become more complex. The book to which my Polish husband kept returning was *Roll of Honour*. He had fought in the Warsaw

Uprising, and this 'elegy for the boys of "Inverdoon" whose lives were lost in the Second World War' moved him deeply.

Eric encountered war three times. While stationed in Orkney in 1939 he started the 'Orkney Blast', the forces' newspaper; to everyone's delight Jeremy Mayer, who edited it throughout the war, then stayed on as editor of the 'Orcadian'. Eric, meanwhile, found himself commissioned by the War Office to write *The Campaign in Italy* and, ten years later, he was appointed official observer of the Korean War. But the war which, for Private Linklater, had changed everything was the First World War. His battalion of the Black Watch, fighting near the Salient, was compelled to retreat, and he was shot. The helmet he'd been wearing that day, never thrown away, had a hole in it exactly the same size as the dent the bullet left in his skull. Somehow, miraculously, it had not killed him. Small wonder his third volume of autobiography was entitled *Fanfare for a Tin Hat*!

Eric's fiction pays little attention to the miseries of war. His three children's books delight the bairns who read them, and in stories like *The Goose Girl* and *Sealskin Trousers* there's an almost palpable enjoyment of life. Orkney is the setting for these stories, and it was to Orkney, 'the place where you are intimately concerned with nature and the procreant forces of the earth', that he never ceased to return.

February 1999.

Colonel Henry William Scarth, 1899–1972, 11th Laird of Breckness

by JAMES IRVINE

Billy Scarth, as he was known, was born on 19th June 1899. His father, Pillans, was the youngest son of Robert, a progressive farmer and prominent factor who built Binscarth. His mother, Madlena Scharbau, was the granddaughter of the historian George Barry and the niece of the wife of William G.T. Watt, the 9th Laird of Breckness. Pillans died when Billy was only three,

and thereafter he and his mother spent many holidays with her aunt at Skaill House.

Billy won a scholarship to St. Paul's School in London. He was commissioned into the Scots Guards in December 1917, and posted to France and then North Russia, where he was awarded the Imperial Russian decorations of the orders of St. Anne and St. Stanislaus. In 1920 he attended Edinburgh University and joined the family law firm of Macrae & Robertson. He qualified as a solicitor in 1924, and became Deputy County Clerk in 1929.

In 1927 he married Mary Beatrix, known as Betty, the daughter of Duncan J. Robertson and Margaret Garden. Two years later he was left the Breckness estate by his cousin Robina Watt, so becoming its 11th Laird. He became heritable Baillie of the Parishes of Stromness and Sandwick, and was elected Honorary President of the West Mainland Agricultural Society in 1930. His modernisation of Skaill led to the discovery of skeletons (now known to be Norse) under the hall, and to the fitting of the round window in the Library.

Appointed County Clerk of Roxburgh in 1935, he returned five years later to serve as Civil Defence Commissioner for Orkney and Shetland when it was feared the Germans might invade from Norway. Liaising with Army, Navy and Air force personnel, he contributed to the good relationship between Orcadians and the forces, many of whom he and his wife entertained at Skaill.

In 1944 he was appointed Director of the Health and Welfare Sub-Division of the Allied Commission for Austria. He returned from Vienna in 1947 to organise the first Regional Hospital Board, in Glasgow.

Returning to Orkney in 1952, he resumed his ambitious programme of extensions to Skaill, to assist in which he acquired the Kirkwall firm of S. Baikie & Son. Later he bought the Westness Estate. Appointed Chairman of the Orkney Territorial Association in 1955, he became Honorary Colonel in 1958. He was President of the Kirkwall Branch of the British Legion, Vice Chairman of the Board of Management for Orkney Hospitals, Vice Chairman of the Orkney Islands Shipping Company, a J.P., and Honorary Sheriff

Substitute.

In 1956 he was elected to represent North Ronaldsay on the County Council, and served as a widely respected Convenor of the Council from 1959 until 1967. He marked his retirement from the Council three years later with a gift of the Coat of Arms of the County which adorned the front of the Broad Street offices until the formation of the Islands Authority in 1975. In 1954 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant, and in 1960 he played a leading role in the visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. He served as Lord Lieutenant of Orkney from 1966 until his death in 1972.

Colonel Scarth's tall stature and public speaking skills dominated formal occasions, while his generosity and exuberance came to the fore in many social events at Skaill, including several private visits by the Queen Mother. Many Sandwick parishioners still recall the regular Christmas children's parties there, and some the celebrations of King George V's Silver Jubilee and the Coronation of King George VI.

Billy Scarth and Betty Robertson had three children: Elizabeth now the Countess Temple of Stowe, who has a cottage in Outertown in Stromness; a daughter who died in infancy; and Walter, who was killed in an accident at the age of 14. Betty died in 1955. Five years later Billy married Miss Kathleen Edgar of Roxburgh, who lived alone at Skaill from 1972 until she died in 1991, leaving the estate to the present Laird.

**ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY LOCAL HISTORY
PROJECTS
FEREDAY PRIZE 1998**

Unfortunately we will not be able to give the results of this year's winners because of an unforeseen delay. They will therefore be published in the next Newsletter.

The Orkney Museum

Tankerness House Museum was founded by Kirkwall Town Council thirty years ago. It later passed to Orkney Islands Council and became the base of the Orkney Museums Service. It now houses major and growing Orkney archaeological and social history collections. From 1st January 1999 it became known as THE ORKNEY MUSEUM.

The Orkney Museums's New Galleries

by BRYCE WILSON

Five years ago it was clear that Tankerness House had run out of space, when the new Viking Period gallery literally ran up against a stone wall. It was then that the curator bowed to the inevitable and gave up tenancy of his home "above the shop". Literally above two shops, the curator's flat occupied the first floor of the old Cathedral Chancellory which adjoins Tankerness House. The Chancellory was acquired by Robert Baikie of Tankerness from Lord Galloway (Sir James Stewart of Burray's heir) in the 1780s. A century ago the property was let by the Baikies to an ironmonger - the adjoining property to a shoemaker. When the Kirkwall Town Council acquired Tankerness House and restored it as a museum in 1968 the upper floor of both shops was made into a flat for the curator.

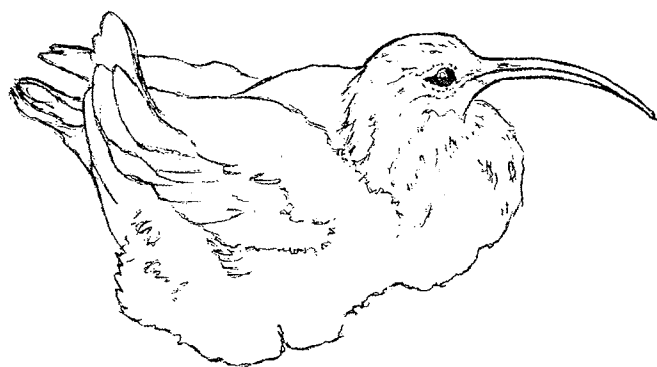
Access to the flat from the museum was made through six feet of masonry wall and a staircase inserted. It was now possible to progress displays beyond the Viking period. The first stage was the development of a Medieval Orkney gallery showing society at that time divided into three layers - those who fight, those who pray and those who labour - with exhibits including chain mail from Cubbie Roo's Castle in Wyre and grave goods of Bishop William the Old. This gallery opened in April 1997.

The next stage covered the transfer of Orkney to Scotland, the end of the Orkney earldom and the rise of the merchant lairds. With the aid of grants from Objective 1 and Heritage Lottery, the

gallery opened in June 1998, and has proved very popular. The problem of displaying the large number and variety of exhibits was overcome by the designer, Jim Clark, by the construction of a large, room-sized case with five viewing areas. Here are the furniture and clothing of the period, from the elegance of the laird to the practicalities of the tenant. On the one hand is the calculating machine made for Sir Archibald Stewart of Burray in 1700; on the other, one of the last Orkney chairs made almost completely of straw. The trade goods brought home from Norway and the Continent in exchange for Orkney farm produce jostle with the products of newly introduced cottage industries. George Traill of Holland in Papay looks down on fine damask linen woven in the island and tools for kelp-burning, which brought unheard-of prosperity to the lairds. From the 17th century Bishop Mackenzie's table linen and a family Bible share space with a witch's spell box, while above is part of the Kirkwall gallows tree.

The new galleries are accessible to all through the recent installation of stairlifts. A further gallery is planned on Orkney in the 19th and early 20th centuries - The making of Modern Orkney.

23.2.1999



Links with Orkney Countryside Committee

by ALISTAIR TULLOCH

We have met on four occasions since the production of last year's Newsletter, so I will try and give an outline of some issues we discussed which are most relevant to the Heritage Society and, at the same time, slightly more interesting.

Early in the year, Mr. P. Blaxter of OIC gave details of some eleven projects which were being tackled in their new budget, many being access programmes and maintenance of some existing projects. A walk-way, along with stiles, from Noup to East Kirbist in Westray, and a path on the right-of-way from Ness towards the Kirkyard in Stromness were being done. The footpath from Wideford Hill car park to the Cairn had been popular beyond all expectations, therefore it was to receive improvements to cater for all-weather access. The right-of-way within St. Margaret's Hope, known as The Trance, was another project, layby/view points such as the one on the Hillside Road, Evie to Dounby, and elsewhere, also a picnic area at Ayre of Myres Beach, Stronsay, were some others mentioned. Some work was to be done at Scapa Beach due to the confrontation between dog owners, with resulting fouling of the sands, and those wishing to indulge in water sports without hindrance. We, in OHS, were requested to submit any similar proposals which would be considered. It was hoped that a leaflet would be produced, detailing the various walks available in Orkney, this to be part-funded by OIC.

The Planning department of OIC had produced a document on the "Siting and Design of Houses in Orkney's Countryside", the outcome of this being that it was seen to be restrictive, and anyone in the country should be entitled to some of the designs of the privileged town dwellers. On the whole, most agreed that care and attention to siting was important. The NFU had seemingly also discussed this and were against some of the sporadic individual buildings and would rather have them in groups. The OIC got back to us, saying that they had subsequently held a seminar on this and came up with the proposal that "Clusters" (a cluster being

defined as two or three) of houses rather than "Settlements" should be encouraged, with around 30m between adjoining properties. The "One for One" ruling would also still be applicable. Most representatives identified lots of empty houses in their areas, as well as many properties which would require modernisation should they be tried on the market. VAT being able to be reclaimed on a new building was one of the reasons why new was often preferred to renovating.

A great deal of discussion took place on the granting of permission to site a very large fish farm at the Bring Deeps off Hoy in Scapa Flow. The Information Centre for Island Technology had produced an extremely extensive study with its relevant proposals which had not been referred to by the councillors.

We have discussed biodiversity at great length, many of the observations of Rachel Bain now being acted upon. A Biodiversity Records Centre has now been set up with the aim to try and keep track of our "Natural Heritage".

The Laura Grimond Award

This is an award for building excellence in Orkney. The first awards will cover the time since Lady Grimond died in January 1994 and thereafter will be given every other year. Any building of character, or the restoration of any old Orkney building, may be entered. Judging will be done on exterior appearances only, and all entries must be quite finished. The Awards will be framed certificates, signed by the judging panel. This year's completed Entry Forms had to be returned by April 30th so that the judging can take place during the Summer. The results will be published by the end of August 1999.

Stromness Museum

by PETER LEITH

The Stromness Museum is getting a major update. The building was originally built as a town hall with the museum upstairs but eventually the Orkney Natural History Society took over the whole building. Recently it was found that there was structural weakness in the upper floor and it was decided that when this was corrected the whole building should be brought up to date with disabled access. The work is now in hand with Orkney Builders being the main contractors. This is being financed by grants from the local authority, the National lottery and others supporting the society. The exhibits have been stored elsewhere and the opportunity has been taken to have more modern style cases laid out in a different plan. It is hoped to have the work done and the museum re-opened in time for the Canadian homecoming next summer.

Some of our Speakers and their Subjects.

- April - Birsay in the Rentals by W.P.L. Thompson.
- April - The Lairds of Skail and the Breckness Estate
by James Irvine.
- May - Bronze Age Burials by
- June - Recent Work in Westray & Elsewhere
by Dr James Barrett.
- July - Norse Use of Whales by Vicki Szabo
- August - Adventures of Samuel Laing by Rae Fereday.
- August - Orkney and Clava Cairns
by Richard Bradley.
- August - The Crantit Dig by Colin Richards.
- November- Shapinsay by Douglas Barker.
- January - Prehistoric Orkney and the Stars
by Dr. Frank Zabriskie.

St. Peter's Kirk, Sandwick

On the 18th April 1998, a very unusual ceremony took place at St. Peter's Church in Sandwick when a ceremonial handing over of the keys of the building by the Rev. Lynn Brady to Lady Caroline Douglas Home from the Scottish Redundant Churches Trust took place. This was to mark the acquisition of the first building by the Trust, which is a charitable body formed to acquire church buildings of merit no longer in use and likely to fall into total disrepair if left as they are. The intention is to make the buildings wind and watertight, and therefore make it possible to have occasional special services there.

This church was built in 1835-6 on a site of several successive churches in the Bay of Skaill. It is an outstanding example of a Scottish Church of that period. Built partly on sand and the remains of a previous church, there were doubts at the time as to whether it would endure, but it has withstood the worst ravages of the weather very well in this exposed area.

The church is rectangular with the ground floor pews and the traditional U-shaped gallery facing the high pulpit on the south wall. There are two large round-topped windows on either side of the pulpit, with two similar smaller ones in the east and west gables, but the remaining windows are rectangular. The outside is harled and has a sturdy bellcote with a ball finial capping the west gable.

In 1842 the church had 564 seats, for the estimated 500 people who were communicants, although there were roughly 900 members in the parish. St. Peter's has retained most of its original fittings giving today's visitors an exceptional chance to see just what was the traditional setting for Presbyterian worship, with its emphasis on preaching the word. Worship was transferred to Quoyloo several years ago, and since then the church has been unused. On the 16th January 1998, the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland conveyed it to the Trust.

H.M.F.

Re-roofing the Crow's Nest

(This article by PAUL NEWMAN is based on his paper which is due to be published in *Vernacular Building 22 - Journal of the Scottish Vernacular Building Working Group*.)

Until this summer, the Crow's Nest was a small roofless farm stead on the steep slope of the hillside at Rackwick near the path to the Old Man of Hoy. The owners, Jack and Dorothy Rendall of Glen, planned the reconstruction of the roofs on two of the buildings, and labour was provided by ten volunteer workers through the Scottish Conservation Trust. Max Collop of Rysa Mill was engaged to be Master of Works and to organise supplies, while Paul Newman advised on traditional building construction.

The farm stead is of the traditional form with two lines of building enclosing a narrow closs. The buildings are aligned down the slope to facilitate drainage, and include a dwelling, bothy, byre, barn and kiln. The two buildings to be re-roofed as the first phase of reconstruction were the barn and byre under one roof and the bothy under another.

A late 19th century photograph from the Washington Wilson Collection shows the intact and occupied buildings with roofs covered with simmens (traditional straw or heather rope). What supported the top layer of simmens of these original roofs could have been an underlayer of simmens (needled roof), or turf, or flagstone.

Having made plans to reconstruct the roofs, repairs were first made to wall heads and to the top of the kiln. Traditional couples were made from split larch cabers, joints cut with hand axes and joined together with hardwood pegs. The couples were then covered with laths. As insufficient material was available for a traditional flagstone roof, it was decided to follow another local tradition and to cover the roof with living grass turf cut from the adjacent ground. Although not part of the tradition, a membrane was laid between the laths and the turf to keep the turf from drying out. The turf was enclosed in galvanised netting and stones attached to keep the roof intact against the wind. The top of the

kiln was completed with a turf capping.

The re-roofing of the two buildings at the Crow's Nest over a ten day period is a considerable achievement. The re-roofing of an Orcadian farm building with a traditional type of roof is now a rare event. The fact that traditional buildings have been brought back into use and that strong weather-tight turf roofs have been constructed at considerably less cost than flagstone roofs will hopefully encourage others to follow the example set by Jack and Dorothy Rendall. Have a look at these buildings next time you visit Rackwick.

Orkney Sound Archives Group

(The Orkney Heritage Society's Millennium Project)

The first meeting was held on Friday 4th December 1998 at Kirkwall Library and the aims of the Group were defined:

- to obtain recordings for the Sound Archives;
- to be helpful in the tasks surrounding the documentation and retrieval systems needed for further increasing this valuable resource of primary source materials;
- to capture important social evidence of the past for the future:
 - to encourage more public involvement;
 - to publish, in small booklet form, a number of the reminiscences;
 - to make use of cameras and camcorders, on suitable occasions, to supplement the documentary evidence;
 - to encourage representatives on the islands who will either record or let the Group know of possible interviewees;
 - to approach Community Councils for their involvement;
 - to contact other societies for publicity in their newsletters;
 - to make the work of the Sound Archive's Group more widely known through publicity in the *Orcadian*, on Radio Orkney and on T.V.

The Marjorie Linklater Writing Award.

Orkney Heritage Society wish to found a memorial to the late Marjorie Linklater, one time Secretary, Chairman, Vice President and President of the Society, in recognition of her work and effort in looking after Orkney's Heritage. This is to be in the form of an award for an original piece of writing submitted by any student in classes 5 or 6 of Kirkwall Grammar School, Stromness Academy, or of the same age group from Orkney College.

A meeting was held in Kirkwall Grammar School to examine the project.

The idea has the support of both Schools and a structure was proposed for the running of the competition:

1. There will be a subject choice on a yearly basis set by the English Departments of the participating establishments, with an indication of the expected maximum length of the submission.
2. The teachers involved would read through the submissions and cream off the best work for assessment.
3. The judging panel would consist of three: one member representing the Linklater family, one member representing the Heritage Society, and one other completely independent individual. It was suggested that this third member could, for example, be one of the local M.P.s.
4. The first prize would be a book token for £25 with a Certificate. There would also be Highly Commended certificates if there were to be a close field.

The Competition is to be launched in October 1999, (the centenary year of Eric Linklater's birth) with submissions by the end of November. This means that the results should be known by the time that the winners are applying for University, or similar entrance.

A.J.F.



Tam's Tally

New Orkney Book List

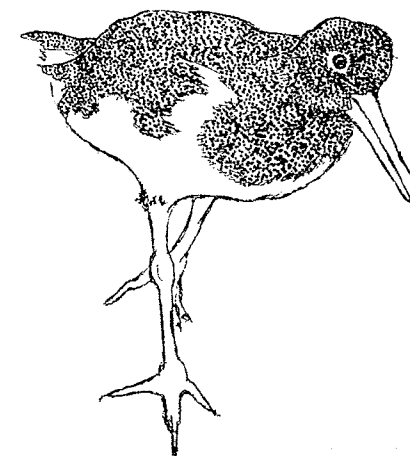
Title	Author	Publisher	Price
A FLAME in the SHADOWS- Robert Reid Bishop of Orkney.	Olaf D. Cuthbert	Orkney Press	£ 11..95
DYING TO LIVE	Moirra Scott	Information Plus	£ 9. 00
IMAGES IN TIME Vol. 2	Norman Sinclair	The Orcadian	£ 15. 45
LANGSKAILL	Gregor Lamb	Byrgisey	£ 8. 45
ORKNEY: A Historical Guide	Caroline Wickham Jones	Birlinn	£ 7. 99
ORKNEY BY BIKE	Les Cowan & Mike Sinclair	Information Plus	£ 6..95
ROMIOSINI,	Capt. R. Sutherland	Dalhanna	£ 20. 00
STATUS and CHECKLIST of the VERTEBRATE FAUNA of ORKNEY.	Chris & Jean Booth	Themselves	£ 3..50
THE ISLAND of THE WOMEN, and other stories.	George Mackay Brown	John Murray	HB £ 16. 99
THE MERMAID BRIDE and other	Tom Muir	The Orcadian	HB £ 13. 99 PB £ 9. 99
ORKNEY FOLK TALES.			
THE SHETLAND BUS	David Howarth	The Shetland Times	£ 7. 99
WHO WAS WHO IN ORKNEY	W.H.Hewison	Bellavista	£ 14. 95
UNFINISHED BUSINESS- Supplement to THE LEPIDOPTERA OF THE ORKNEY ISLANDS.	R.I.Lorimer	Hedara Press	£ 7. 50

(Ed's Note:- The Society is most grateful to Tam Mc Phail of Stromness Books and Prints, for supplying this list of books, and hopes to make it a regular item in future Newsletters.)

St. Magnus and St. Rognvald

When I asked Dr. Barbara Crawford if it were possible to write a short article on St. Magnus and his cult, she very kindly sent me a transcript of an article by her, which has recently come out in the Scottish Church History Society Records Transactions, volume 28, published in 1998. It is entitled *St. Magnus and St. Rognvald, the two Orkney Saints*. She decided that it would be of far more interest to readers to read the whole article, rather than an abbreviated one, and suggested that I contact the editor to get permission to print it in this newsletter. Unfortunately it is too long, but I strongly recommend that you read it. A copy will be available in the Kirkwall Library. Please ask at the desk.

H.M.F.



When are we going to Orkney?

by IAN M. HEDDLE

My father, George Heddle, lived with my mother and five children in a lovely rambling Edwardian Country house just outside Dedham, made famous by John Constable's pictures. I am the youngest and when, recently, there was reference to Gordon Childe's work at Skara Brae, I was able to say that I remember it quite clearly.

Father had a big old 25 horse-power Fiat open-tourer with a canvas roof and celluloid side screens. He and mother used to come North every year to stay with my grandparents, Peter Sinclair Heddle and Agnes at Westfield, Stromness, sometimes bringing two or three children (giving us turns). We used to camp on the journey and the old car was roomy enough to cope with it all! Our journeys in those far off days were surprisingly good, up the "Great North Road" and then later on the very narrow ones in the Highlands. The Berriedale and Dunbeath bends really were HAIRPINS then!

Getting the Fiat onto the old steam St. Ola was quite a challenge. Two heavy baulks of timber were aligned to each side and the poor driver had to get across with the aid of the crew's directions. I loved and hated that old ship. I was usually sick but I simply HAD to look at the piston rod above the one cylinder, putting my head under the open sky light to watch it and holding my breath as the hot oily smell was a very powerful aid to sea-sickness.

St Ola in those days sailed from Scrabster at about 2.30 p.m. and went via Cantick Head to Hoxa where a little motor boat came to meet her as she hove to. Then off again to Scapa Pier for a short call and at last through to Stromness seeing the air locks or the upside down hulls of the old German Fleet being made ready to go to Rosyth for breaking up. I may well be wrong but I think St Ola got into Stromness at about 6.30 p.m.

In Stromness Father was always welcomed by Danny Watt as well as our family. Dodda Marwick was another close friend -perhaps

they were both old school friends. Dodda's old shop in Graham Place was a mixture of clothes and natural history curios as I remember! Outings to Father's cousins were routine and I clearly recall Skelday (near the Click Mill) where we always had Duck eggs for tea and picked Blue-berries. The wee trout in the well was always inspected of course.

I also clearly remember walking along the Skail beach, past the Mill to where Skara Brae was being excavated by Professor Gordon Childe. They were then known as the "Weems of Skara Brae". I never did find out what a WEEM is!



Photograph by courtesy of the Orkney Library - Photographic Archive.

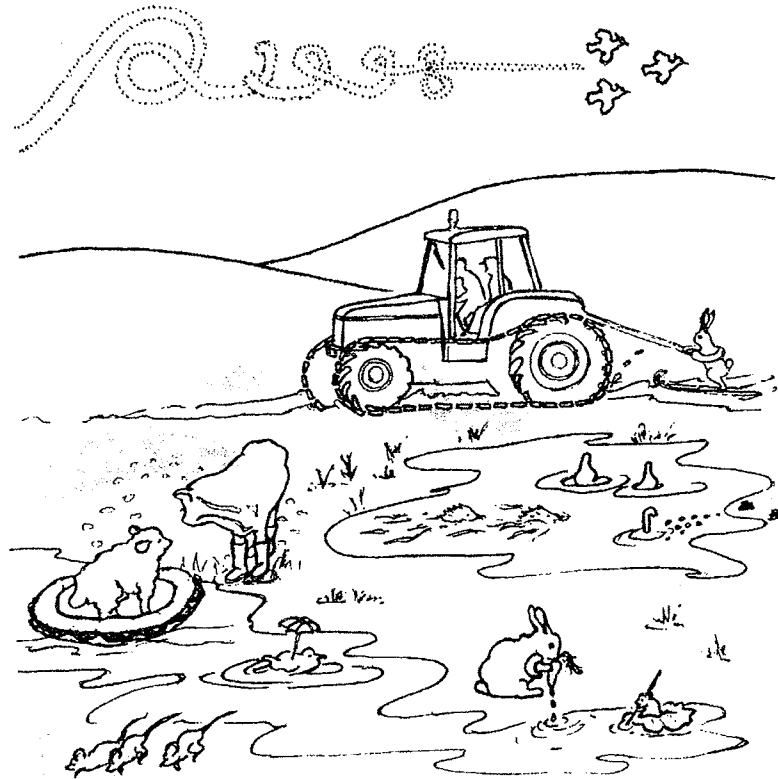
Treasurer's Report 1997/98

A detailed account of finances was given at the A.G.M. in November but the following details might be of interest to readers.

There is an increase of £7,300 in accumulated balances from the previous year and this is mainly accounted for by the first payment of £6,160 from the ELF Consortium's new Covenant being received in the same financial year as the final payment of the first Covenant.

The major sources of income, other than the ELF Covenant payments of £12,160, remain that of bank and building society interest totalling £3,518 and the £1,792 tax reclaimed. Major items of expenditure included the payment of £7,792 to Orkney Islands Council in support of the County's archaeological services, a start-up grant of £1,000 to the Neolithic Conference and loans totalling £7,000 to the Neolithic Conference.

Although not strictly within the Society's financial year the Neolithic Conference was within the calendar year of 1998. Total income, mainly from delegates and sponsors, was £29,173 and total expenditure £25,012. Speakers' travel and accommodation and printing accounted for the major outlays. The apparent credit balance of £4,161 is however, an illusory one as the loans of £7,000 have to be repaid to the Society leaving a real shortfall of £2,839. As OIC and Orkney Enterprise had between them undertaken to cover a shortfall of £4,500, application has been made to them for grants to the the amount of £2,839.



Any ideas for a title? No prizes - except a promise of the winning title and your name in next year's Newsletter.