



Orkney Heritage Society



1968-2018

50th Anniversary Issue

Objectives of the Orkney Heritage Society

The aims of the Society are to promote and encourage the following objectives by charitable means:

1. To stimulate public interest in, and care for the beauty, history and character of Orkney.
2. To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general public amenity or historical interest.
3. To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in Orkney.
4. To pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, conferences, publicity and promotion of schemes of a charitable nature.

New members are always welcome

To learn more about the society and its ongoing work, check out the regularly updated website at www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/ohs

or contact us at

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Front Cover: Robert Garden and his wife, Margaret Jolly, along with one of their daughters standing next to the newly re-built Groatie Hoose. It got its name from the many shells, including 'groatie buckies', decorating the tower. Note the weather vane showing some of Garden's floating shops. Photo gifted by Mrs Catherine Dinnie, granddaughter of Robert Garden.

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2017 has been a year of consolidation after the frenetic activity of 2016.

Various funds which Orkney Heritage Society (OHS) have held for other organisations have now been passed on to the appropriate recipients. £890.60 was given to the Swandro Dig in Rousay through the County Archaeologist, Julie Gibson. £19572.47 held in our St Boniface Account has now been passed on to the Papay Community Association. This money was raised some time ago for the preservation of St Boniface Kirk and Papay Community Association will now hold the funds for that purpose.

OHS gave support to Birsay Heritage Trust for efforts to save and develop HMS Tern, RNAS Twatt Airfield, as a visitor attraction.

The Fereday Prize continues to be an established part of the school curriculum. I went along to the prize giving in Stromness, which as always is a very positive experience. Janette Park, who won the very first prize in 1986, spoke at the event. She was also one of the judges, along with Jack Drever. Thanks must go to the judges for their deliberations, along with Sheena Wenham for once again organising the event.

There have unfortunately been no entries this year for the Linklater Award, which is open to pupils and young students for a piece of writing with an Orkney theme. Our secretary has been in contact with the schools to try and resurrect this useful competition.

The Eynhallow Trip was another success and many thanks to Kim Burns for the organisation. The trip is a major fundraiser for the Society.

I continue to represent OHS on Kirkwall Townscape Heritage Initiative Partnership, which I chair. The Initiative has helped to renovate many properties in the Conservation Area and brought a number of properties back into use. It continues into 2019 and hopefully many more properties will be restored.

OHS is now a SCIO, which stands for Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The advantage for this status is that it gives members protection from liability. A down side is that our constitution has had to be changed and by necessity is very lengthy, but the objectives of the Society remain the same.

On the property front, we have now leased the Strynd properties to OIC on a 99-year lease, with OIC having paid the legal costs.

A group of us gathered at Marwick Head for the 101st anniversary of the sinking of HMS Hampshire. As well as observing a two-minute silence at the time of the sinking, we took the opportunity to do some reseedling. Most of the work has now been completed and the enhanced memorial has now been handed back to OIC. The OHS published book on the sinking continues to gather excellent reviews and was short listed in the 2017 Mountbatten Maritime Foundation Literary Awards.

Looking ahead, June 2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of our society, a major milestone in any organisation. Plans are well underway to publish the 8th New Orkney

Antiquarian Journal to mark this occasion, as well as a tribute to OHS member, Willie Thomson. As a contribution to the Journal, I have written a short history of the Society and was struck by the hard work and dedication of members over many years, which led to some amazing successes. Researching the article has prompted me to write some of my own reminiscences of my past association with OHS. One of the founding members of the Society, Dr Ray Fereday, has corrected me on a number of points and given me a description of how the Fereday Prize came about, which is published in this newsletter.

Ernest Marwick Bequest

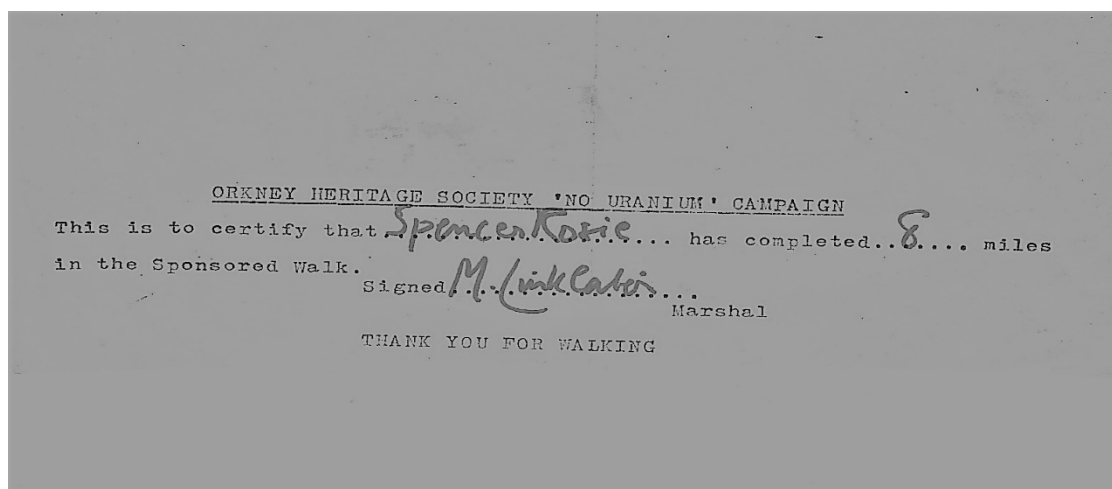
In recent months, OHS Board Members have been reviewing the Ernest Marwick bequest. In 1985, OHS received a sum of £28,000 from the residue of Ernest Marwick's estate for the *"express purpose of enabling the Society to finance and carry on the fight against the prospecting for, or mining of, the mineral Uranium in any part of Orkney"*. The sum was invested and some of the interest used for other projects. Some years ago, it was agreed that £30,000 be reserved for the purpose Ernest described. It is now some time since the attempt was made to prospect and mine for Uranium and much has happened in the intervening years to reduce the likelihood of this ever happening again. While continued vigilance is required, the question now has arisen whether we should free up at least some of this money for other heritage uses. Indeed, Ernest gave the Society a get out clause, saying, *"if it becomes clear that Uranium mining is not going at any time to take place in Orkney, the Society is to use the said residue of my estate, which I place absolutely at the Orkney Heritage Society's disposal, to help conserve the landscape, buildings and traditions of Orkney in whatsoever way seems best to the members of the Committee of the said Society"*. While Ernest gave the Committee (now the Board) of OHS the right to make this decision, it was felt members should have an input and a final decision would not be made until the AGM in November. We would therefore be keen to hear the views of members on this matter.

Personal Reminiscences of Orkney Heritage Society by Spencer Rosie

While I did not become an active member of Orkney Heritage Society until 2012, my association with the Society goes back to 1979. My first contact actually goes back another couple of years but involves a confession on my part. It would have been around 1976 or early 1977 when I was approached in the Marischal Bar in Aberdeen to sign an OHS petition to oppose uranium mining in the West Mainland of Orkney. I had been studying Geology at Aberdeen University and, shockingly, I put self-interest before community by refusing to sign, saying this may be my only opportunity to find employment in Orkney. There, I have said it. I hope, however, that the reader will realise that I did make up for this appalling lapse.

By 1979, the Heritage Society's 'No Uranium Campaign' was in full swing and many of my friends were very much involved. I was still working in Aberdeen but came home as often as I could. On one of my trips home in July, I took part in a sponsored walk on the Uranium Corridor, from Stromness to Yesnaby and back, to raise funds for the campaign. Jo Grimond

launched the event and, as it was his birthday, was presented with a card saying, "Many Happy Uncontaminated Returns of the Day". Being the first to complete the walk, I was photographed with OHS Chairman, Marjorie Linklater, for *The Orcadian*.



A few months later, I was asked by OHS to attend a major anti-nuclear rally in Edinburgh. There had been much discussion within the Committee regarding OHS straying into the anti-nuclear debate. The Chairman, Marjorie Linklater, was keen to attend, but due to the divisions decided to stay home. I was unaware of all this and I guess I was asked as an expedient. I was living in Aberdeen at the time and did not charge the Society travelling expenses. I must admit, I had forgotten that it was OHS which had asked me to go. The rally itself, which was organised by SCRAM, Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace, I remember well, particularly the march through Princess Street and the speeches at the Meadows, where I sat near to the actress, Julie Christie. Robin Cook MP spoke particularly well. Ex Stromness Provost, Councillor J. R. T. Robertson, spoke on behalf of Orkney.

By November 1979, I was back working in Orkney, having secured employment at the Flotta Oil Terminal. It was at this time a public meeting was held to discuss the Government decision on the Public Inquiry into OIC's Structure Plan clause banning the mining of uranium in Orkney. The inquiry's Reporter had actually recommended the clause be removed, but the Secretary of State for Scotland overruled this and allowed OIC to keep the clause. There was, however, a sting in the tail with the final decision remaining with the Westminster Government, any decision to be taken in the national interest. While there was relief that OIC could keep its no uranium mining policy, there was consternation that the final decision would not be at a local level.

It was as a result of this meeting that a group of us, Margaret Flaws, Dorothy Ritch, Colin Taylor and I, got together and started a political group, called the Orkney Movement, to seek greater autonomy for the islands, and in particular gain control over mineral rights. While still in Aberdeen, I had become friends with John Goodlad from Shetland, who told me of the political goings on in Shetland as a result of the massive oil developments taking place there. The arguments being put forward by the Shetland Movement for considerable powers to be devolved to the islands really struck a chord and seemed to be the answer for Orkney's dilemma set by the Government decision on the uranium issue.

The uranium issue was not the only aspect of the nuclear industry to threaten Orkney's indigenous industries. In 1984, a company called ENSEC, a subsidiary of Cluff Oil, proposed disposing of low and intermediate level nuclear waste beneath the sea bed in the Stormy Bank Basin, west of Orkney, using North Sea oil drilling technology. With the uranium issue having politicised many in Orkney, it did not take long for an opposition group to form. The Stormy Bank Group included representatives of Orkney's main industries, farming, fishing and tourism as well other local groups, such as OHS, with Marjorie Linklater acting as the group's secretary. The vice-chairman position was reserved for someone from Shetland, with John Goodlad, the Secretary of the Shetland Fishermen's Association, fulfilling that role.

During the Falklands conflict, the Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, had famously stated "the wishes of the islanders are paramount". As a result, the Stormy Bank Group held a plebiscite, asking the people of Orkney, "do you support the proposal to put radioactive waste in the sea bed at Stormy Bank, to the west of Orkney?".

By December 1985, some 6,000 people had signed the plebiscite, with 99.9% saying no to the question. OIC Convener, Edwin Eunson, was able to take this result to Europe and helped him to win unanimous support from the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions in opposing nuclear waste dumping beneath the sea bed.

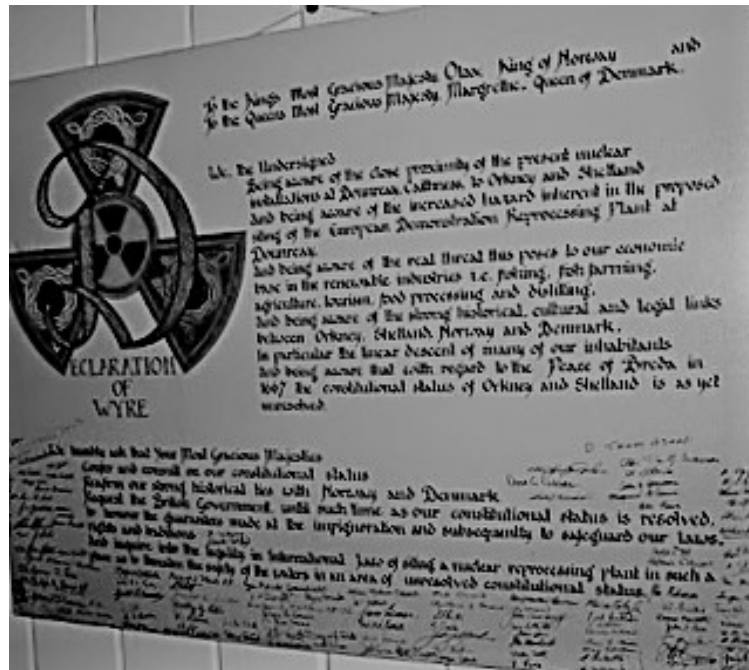


Signing the plebiscite. Back row, left to right: Councillor Spencer Rosie, Edwin Eunson, Convener of Orkney Islands Council, Charlie Rendall, Treasurer of Stormy Bank Group, Jo Malloch, Orkney Fishermen's Society, Ron Gilbert, Chief Executive Orkney Islands Council, John Dennison, Orkney Chamber of Commerce. Front row, left to right: Marjorie Linklater, Secretary of Stormy Bank Group, William Wood, NFU and David Lea, Chairman of Stormy Bank Group.

In early 1986, the Stormy Bank Group hosted a meeting with a representative from NIREX (Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Inspectorate), who disclaimed any association with ENSEC and their scheme for subsea burial of nuclear waste but admitted that if feasibility studies were followed by favourable reports, subsea disposal would go to Public Inquiry. Concerns that Stormy Bank would become an attractive option for disposing nuclear waste were increased when another issue surfaced at this time. This was the proposal for a plutonium reprocessing plant at Dounreay, which prompted a local public inquiry, two days of which were held in Kirkwall in May 1986.

The Inquiry in Kirkwall was memorable for Edwin Eunson's towering performance, speaking, not only for Orkney, but also representing Shetland and the Western Isles. His ability to think on his feet and run rings round the applicant's legal representatives was a joy to behold. A huge number of local organisations and individuals made submissions, with Ian MacInnes making a passionate case on behalf of OHS. Edwin Eunson summed it up admirably, "I think that the Inquiry speaks for itself – representations from fishermen, farmers, merchants, those in the tourist trade, housewives, mothers, ordinary people who have said they have no connection with any political party or group but who are extremely concerned about this because of the future of their families and of the islands. The opposition is not narrow – it is right across the whole range of the people of Orkney" (*The Orcadian* May 29th 1986).

Launched at the start of the Kirkwall session of the Dounreay Inquiry was the Declaration of Wyre, drawn up by Margaret Flaws and others in Wyre. Aimed at gaining international support for Orkney's case, the Declaration asked the Danish and Norwegian monarchs to "confer and consult" on the constitutional status of Orkney and Shetland, and the implications of Dounreay discharges into the Pentland Firth, which could be international waters. Two coloured, hand painted documents were produced, one for King Olaf of Norway and the other Queen Margrethe of Denmark, with people in both Orkney and Shetland being invited to sign. I was one of the first signatories at its launch. A copy of the Declaration can be seen in the Wyre Heritage Centre (all photos in this article were taken by the author unless otherwise stated).



Thankfully, none of the threats to Orkney materialised, nuclear generation stopping at Dounreay in 1994. Ironically the long-term security of jobs at Dounreay was confirmed by the decision to de-commission the plant.

After nine years as an Orkney Islands Councillor, I had a break from politics, before standing for Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council in 1999. Unfortunately, the previous four years had seen no Community Council in the city, its business being carried out by the Island Councillors for Kirkwall, meeting as the Kirkwall Finance Sub Committee. Happily, by 1999 there were enough people who came forward to hold an election. I was successfully returned as a member and then elected as chairman. It was a good time to be part of a Community Council as each one in Orkney was to be given an extra £5,000 as part of the Millennium celebrations. As far as Kirkwall was concerned, a project I was keen to pursue was one that had originally been proposed by OHS member, Gordon Linklater, for placing interpretive panels at places of historic interest, not only in the town but throughout Orkney. The idea of interpretive plaques for Kirkwall was readily agreed by the Community Council and fitted well with the aims of the millennium fund, which was to be spent on a project "of lasting benefit to the community". I was very fortunate in obtaining the assistance of Sheila Scott, who undertook the art work for the coat-of-arms and procured the solid polyurethane plaques, and Bryce Wilson, who shortened and improved my lengthy text. Once all the permissions were obtained, the first batch of plaques were erected by the Vice-Chairman and I in the evening when it was quiet. A full list of the green plaques was given in the 2015 Newsletter.

The project also sat well with the 'Ba' Committee's proposal for a Gary Gibson bronze relief to celebrate the game. A very successful fund-raising campaign had raised about three-quarters of the approximately £4,000 cost and Kirkwall Community Council agreed to cover the rest.

Both the 'Ba' Committee and the Community Council wanted the plaque to be placed on the wall of St Magnus Cathedral kirkyard wall, but Historic Scotland was stubbornly opposed. As the wall was part of the Grade A Listed Cathedral precinct, the Government body had the final say but, despite support from OIC and a face to face meeting with Graham Reed, Principal Inspector of Listed Buildings, the decision to oppose remained the same. The Ba Committee and the Community council had to settle for it being placed at the Mercat Cross. Unfortunately, it was initially placed at the back of the steps to the Cross, which proved very unsatisfactory. Eventually sense prevailed and it now lies on the Broad Street side of the Mercat Cross, where passers-by can see it.

Another project that had been suggested as a millennium project was the restoration of The Groatie Hoose. Mrs Catherine Dinnie, a granddaughter of Robert Garden, had been lobbying for years to have something done to preserve the unusual folly. As £5,000 would achieve little in the way of restoration, the Community Council, while sympathetic, had to initially turn down her request. It did, however, get me thinking we should make the effort, being well acquainted with the summer house, having worked at Gardens for a number of years. The history of the Groatie Hoose goes back to 1730, when James Traill retired to his house, 'the Gallery' in Bridge Street. As well as restoring the house, he created a large garden with trees. In it, he built a small summer house using the ballast stones from Pirate Gow's ship, *Revenge*, which had run aground on the Calf of Eday five years before. To refloat the ship, the ballast stones were removed and dumped on the beach. Traill procured some of these volcanic stones from his friend, James Fea, who had captured the notorious pirate. Traill's house changed hands a number of times, before coming into the possession of Robert Garden, who redeveloped the whole area, building houses and warehouses in the once lovely garden. The little summerhouse became dilapidated and to prevent people removing more of the ballast stones, he rebuilt it using dressed stone for the walls and Gow's ballast stones making up the tall conical tower. On top, he placed a weather vane showing four of his floating shops. A century later and the summerhouse was once again in a poor state and had also lost its original context in an eighteenth-century garden.



In 2001, Kirkwall Community Council agreed to my suggestion that it become the lead organisation in raising funds for a restoration project. It soon became apparent that restoration on the existing site was not going to be an option, which was a pity as the area had the potential for a retail and eating area, with the Groatie Hoose its focal point. The owners of the area, Tod Holdings Ltd. were keen to be rid of the problem and had offered to gift the Groatie Hoose to Orkney Islands Council provided the building was removed. Unofficial public access through the big double doors of a warehouse had been tolerated but this could not last. Grant

funding would be impossible if there was no public access.

After some deliberation and consultation, the tree nursery at the back of Tankerness House Gardens was deemed to be the best site for the relocation, particularly as it would restore the summerhouse to its original eighteenth-century garden setting and allow unrestricted public access. Leslie Burgher of Pentarq was appointed architect and asked to come up with an estimate of cost for the work involved. Obtaining an estimate was always going to be difficult as the precise nature of the tower was unknown and its location made access for heavy lifting equipment difficult. Eventually a figure over £74,000 was arrived at, which was paired back to a more manageable £61,430.

Grant applications could then begin, but an initial approach to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was unsuccessful as there was no partnership funding. After gaining support from nOIC's Heritage Fund, Orkney Enterprise and Tod Holdings Ltd, and with the help and assistance of Steve Callaghan, OIC's Heritage Officer, a second application to HLF in 2003 was successful. By the beginning of 2004, the funding was in place and all consents had been given. Ian Sloan of Pentarq was appointed Project Manager and tender documents were drawn up.

The result of the tendering exercise was initially a disappointment as the lowest price from Casey Construction was significantly above our budget price, leaving a funding gap the Community Council could not fill on its own. Orkney Heritage Society was therefore approached to come into partnership with the Community Council to allow applications to be made to some Charitable funding bodies. The Society had attempted very much the same project in the early 1990s but was stopped when misinformation was circulated that it was intended to site the building in the middle of Tankerness House Gardens and strong objections were raised. Being still keen to preserve the building, OHS readily agreed and, with the help of its chairman, Bill Hamilton, the funding gap of around £12,000 was soon reduced, leaving a shortfall of just over £2,000.

A further complication came when Tods of Orkney was sold, the land and property being bought by the Orissor Trust. The new owners were also keen to be rid of the little summerhouse, confirming relocation was the only way to save the building, and agreed to pay the shortfall in funding, which soon more than doubled.

Relocation and Restoration

On 5th July 2004, the tender price submitted by Casey Construction, which turned out to be extremely competitive, was at last able to be accepted, with work beginning on 1st September. While the four corner cones were lifted off intact, a method of removing the 5.3m high main tower without it disintegrating into small pieces was required. The top of the main cone was bound with iron hoops to protect it when being removed (see below – Paddy Casey is on the scaffold, appearing to hold up the top cone).



Photo: Pentarq

It was found that the ballast stones formed a relatively thin outer layer, with the inside of the tower consisting of loose rubble infill, held up by wooden sleepers which were later found to be so rotten that the structure was in danger of imminent collapse. The loose rubble was removed down to about one metre depth and a conical shutter was then inserted to which concrete grout was flooded to stabilise the walls of the cone. With the outside bound by iron hops, the section was lifted off intact. This was repeated until the whole of the tower was strengthened and dismantled.



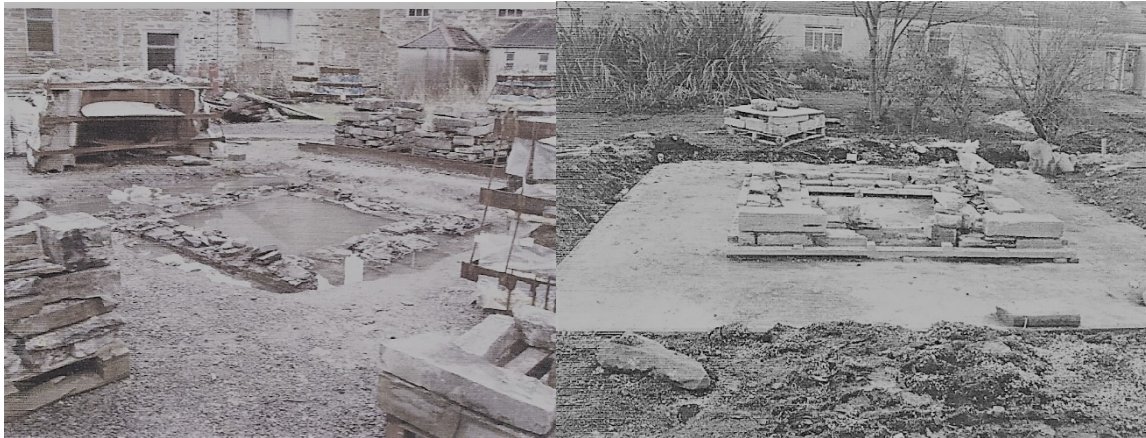
The bottom section was too big to be lifted off in one piece, so it had to be split in two halves, each section being held together by the concrete grout and metal beams. The



breaking of the tower into large manageable sections made re-assembly much easier. The walls of the summerhouse were dismantled, numbered course by course and placed upside

down on pallets, each face of the wall placed on the separate pallets.

A new reinforced concrete foundation slab was laid in Tankerness House Gardens and the masonry rebuilt in lime mortar by simply reversing the dismantling. The tower sections were then hoisted into position and the join lines repointed, giving the opportunity to introduce fresh shells into the reconstruction. The foundation in Garden Street was left undisturbed and the project was monitored by Orkney Archaeological Trust.



Above left: dismantlement complete.

Above right: reconstruction begins.

Running up through the tower was a pole, like a shop's spar, much of which had rotted away and would originally have supported Robert Garden's weather vane. The opportunity was taken to make a new weather vane, designed by artist, Sam Macdonald, from an 1898 photo of sailing ships competing in Kirkwall Regatta.



Above left: top cone replaced.

Above right: new weathervane.



The Groatie Hoose Warming, Saturday 4th June 2005. Left to right: Paddy Casey, Spencer Rosie, Leslie Burgher, Bryce Wilson who performed the official opening, John Mackenzie, engineer with Casey Construction and Charlie Juhlenski, structural stonemason who worked on the project throughout. Photo: Kenny Pirie.

Brief summary of project:

1st September 2004: work starts at Garden Street site.

October: 4 small cones removed,

top of the main cone lifted off plus 2 other sections.

November: final section of main cone removed.

December: down taking of walls 80% complete.

January 31st 2005: walls rebuilt in Tankerness House Gardens

February: 2 base units of tower reassembled.

March: main reconstruction complete and appeal made for sea shells to fill in the grouting.

April-May: boundary wall built

12th May: weathervane installed.

From Blood-Letting To Tele-Medicine by Dr Tom Rendall

This article is based on a lecture that I gave at the Orkney Science Festival in 2016. Entitled *Been no weel bit coman at noo* it covered aspects of medicine in Orkney over the past 400 years or so. Starting off with the superstitious beliefs, some early medical practice will be covered. Some remedies noted by John Firth in *Reminiscences of an Orkney Parish* will follow after which a brief discussion of hospital services will be given.

Early medicine

In the 16th Century it was thought that the 'Evil Eye' was possessed by both men and women. Disease could be caused by the possessor praising the victim excessively. Such power to cause disease was thought to be inherited from father to daughter, and from mother to son. The effects of the 'evil eye' could be overcome by disparaging the victim. The use of horse-nails, horse-shoes, rowan and juniper sticks, string or threads, charm-stones etc, and actions such as spitting, could ward off the effects of this affliction.

The presence of orthodox educated medical practitioners in Orkney is first seen towards the end of the seventeenth century. The first of these general practitioners was Dr. Mattheu Mackaile, who was appointed as “chirurgion-mediciner to the Sherriffdom of Orkney” for the period 1660-1665. In 1665 he returned to Edinburgh where, in 1669, he described himself as 'apothecary'. He graduated M. A. from Edinburgh in 1654 and graduated M. D. in 1696, from King's College, Aberdeen.

Eighteenth century doctors in Orkney, relied heavily on humoral methods for their cures. According to the old records of their patients, of Dr. Alexander Munro, Dr. Hugh Sutherland and Dr. John Watt show a reliance on bleeding, vomiting and purging, together with blistering, and the use of substances noted for their humoral qualities, such as Peruvian Bark (Quinine).

The shortage of doctors in the islands during the eighteenth century was to some extent supplemented by a series of consultations by correspondence, undertaken by doctors in the larger Scottish towns. Pre-eminent amongst these doctors was Dr. William Cullen in Edinburgh, who undertook a considerable practice by way of correspondence, between 1764 and 1790.

Doctors resident in Kirkwall often undertook postal consultation of this kind for patients residing in the outer isles. In archive material there exists a letter from Dr. Hugh Sutherland to Lady Elsness, residing in Stronsay. It seems that Dr. Sutherland was informed of Lady Elsness' indisposition through her friend or servant, Mrs. Fea. On receipt of knowledge of her symptoms, Dr. Sutherland wrote to Lady Elsness giving lengthy and detailed instructions as to what to do to cure her troublesome nocturnal cough.

He sent Mrs. Fea back to Stronsay with a number of medications including purgatives, blistering plasters and cough medicines. He also gave her advice concerning her diet, and advocated that “she obtain the services of somebody (not a doctor) to bleed her.

John Firth

Moving on to the accounts given by John Firth – which covered the parish of Firth – he presented an informative yet illuminating glimpse into the health and wellbeing of the people in the 19th Century. He said “present day folk.... in their struggle for a bare subsistence endured without murmur such discomfort and privation as would send many of the present pampered generation to an early grave”. Firth called smallpox “the greatest scourge” and said that infection was encouraged. It was seen as unavoidable and inevitable and was spread in a most unpalatable fashion. Whisky and sulphur was the medication for the disease.

Typhus Fever – not sought after and people shunned in the community drink of blatho (butter milk) along with a speunfeu o raw sooans (both to relieve and soothe the sufferings) Whisky and sulphur were administered for measles, mumps – otherwise known as branks and Chickenpox (the nirls).

Consumption, or the decline (tuberculosis), was rife in those bygone days with sufferers seldom allowed out. There was a considerable carelessness in the prevention of spreading the disease. Some families were almost wiped out by tuberculosis.

Toothache was referred to as the worm as the pain was thought to be caused by a worm entering the nerves of the tooth. One cure was to use the serpent's tongue – lesser spearwort. As Firth says "The juice was very pungent and the cure was often worse than the disease."

With regard to mental health, here is a rather lengthy quote from John Firth which would not be deemed appropriate in discussion of the topic today: "Lunacy and idiocy were much in evidence in bygone days than in these later years, when the mentally afflicted can be comfortably attended to in suitable asylums and schools. Harmless imbeciles travelled about with poke or caisie, picking up a mere subsistence in doles of meal and potatoes (and getting accommodation in outhouses)". "Dangerous lunatics roamed the country at large, and were the terror of nervous women and lonely cowherds. Stories of threats and doings of the insane spread like wildfire among the herds – sometimes exaggeratedin passing from one to another..... at times spreading a reign of terror among youngsters."

Hospitals in Orkney

Orkney's first hospital was established in October 1845, in what is today the West End Hotel in Main Street. In 1836, John Balfour of Trenabie set up a charitable trust for the founding of a hospital with the interest from £20,000 worth of Mexican government bonds. In 1845, the trustees of the hospital fund bought the house from local merchant, James Shearer, together with the two large gardens and blacksmith's shop on the west side of the street, for £450.

At first known simply as the Orkney Hospital, it became the Balfour Hospital in 1853, in recognition of the contribution of the Balfour family, a name which continues at Orkney's present hospital in New Scapa Road, Kirkwall.

The Garden Memorial building was opened in 1927. This was named after Kirkwall business man Robert Garden who had left money in his will for the project. It soon became known as the Balfour Hospital – as its predecessor had been named. The old building was used as a fever hospital for a further 10 years. In 1937 a purpose-built tuberculosis and infectious diseases hospital was opened at Eastbank.

The present day

Many changes have taken place since the days of blood-letting and home-grown cures. The new hospital, due to open in 2019, will also be known as the Balfour. This will be a modern, spacious and well-equipped health centre – very different to the other hospital buildings of the past.

Health services in Orkney today provide the population with better transport to hospital – especially from the North Isles of Orkney. Screening is offered for bowel, cervical and breast

cancer. Pregnant mothers are provided with pre-natal care and scans are available at different stages of pregnancy.

There are campaigns and posters to publicise warning signs of illness along with advice on how to lead a healthier lifestyle. Consultations can take place by video conferencing which saves the patient in Orkney having to travel to Aberdeen for example. Technological devices have applications that can assist with many aspects of the provision of healthcare in Orkney.

When we look back at “the good old days” and consider the medical practices – some of them inhumane with the remedies possibly more harmful than the ailments being treated - and compare those times with present day medicine then it must be postulated that life in Orkney at the present day is infinitely superior to the past.

Bina Cursiter, an Orkney Suffragist by Lucy Gibbon

2018 is the 100th Anniversary of women winning the right to vote in the UK. Choosing one of the campaigners in Orkney to research has revealed a most interesting life story. Despite speakers travelling to Orkney since 1871 to talk about the emancipation of women, it wasn't until the arrival of Mrs Bina Cursiter that a local society was formed. With a boundless enthusiasm for reform, she appeared to be the catalyst for the campaign in Orkney.

Bina Cursiter was baptized Jacobina Watt on the 15th November 1854 to parents Philip Butler Watt and Elizabeth Patterson. Her father was an engraver and they lived in Register Street, Edinburgh. By 1861, the family had moved to Surrey where she first went to school and by 1871, they had moved to Nottingham. The headmistress of her school there, who was a friend of the famous Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth, was asked to recommend one of her pupils to work as a governess in Hungary. She suggested Bina, who was about 18. Bina accepted the post and spent the next 3 years in the employ of Count Lajos Benyovszky looking after his daughter Marietta who, in 1871, was 5 years old. When Marietta grew up she married Eberhard Prince of Lippe-Wissenfeld, who ruled one of the 25 sovereign states that made up the German Empire in the late 19th century.

In the 1880s, Bina's family moved back to Scotland to live in Glasgow. In 1885 on a visit to Kirkwall, she met James Walls Cursiter. A friendship grew and they corresponded regularly until 1892, when they were married. She was aged 37. In a speech at her wedding reception, she was described as a highly cultured and accomplished lady. James W Cursiter was also born in Edinburgh, but by 1892 he had taken on his family's business and now lived and worked as a grocer and general merchant in Albert Street, Kirkwall. He was also a well-respected archaeologist and antiquarian. Their daughter Lizzie Watt was born in Kirkwall in 1893. The family then moved from Albert Street to the larger house of Daisybank on East Road in Kirkwall.

It was in this house on 25th September 1909 that the Orkney Women's Suffrage Society was formed. The following month a constitution was adopted and office bearers were elected. The president was Mrs Baikie of Tankerness, vice-president was Mrs MacEwan of Kirkwall and Mrs Bina Cursiter was elected secretary. She offered to supply information and pamphlets on the subject. Annual subscription was set at one shilling. The OWSS was a peaceful suffragist society, as opposed to a suffragette society which was known for its extreme and violent activities. They held seven meetings in the first year, by which time they had 55 members.

Mrs Cursiter devoted much time to the movement by writing to the press and other propaganda of non-militant kind. At a monthly meeting in 1910 held in the Free Library buildings, Bina as Secretary *"reported that a representative petition in favour of Women's Suffrage, signed by 116 [Kirkwall] burgh Parliamentary electors, including half the Town Council, had been forwarded to the member for the Wick Burghs for presentation to Parliament."* At the same meeting she led a debate on the *"question of the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women"*, the opposition was *"ably championed by Mr Miller, of the Burgh School."* Many men did attend the meetings, including Provost Sclater, W S Mackintosh (editor and proprietor of the Orcadian newspaper) and also Bina's husband, J W Cursiter. His nephew Stanley Cursiter, who was to become one of Orkney's most famous artists, designed banners for the society.

At the 7th March 1912 meeting, Bina read a paper on the Economic Independence of Women and *"held the close attention of her hearers."* At the AGM in 1913, Bina submitted the annual report, which *"showed an increase of the members, there now being on the roll 71 members and 104 "Friends" of the movement... Mrs Cursiter was thanked for her arduous and self-sacrificing services in the Cause."*

In January 1914, she wrote to the Kirkwall Town Council asking if they would send a representative to London to the *"big demonstration being held by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society at the Albert Hall on February 14 and form part of the proposed deputation to Mr Asquith at the same time"*. Although help with traveling expenses was available, the councillors decided *"to take no action in the matter."*



Photo taken by Robert H. Robertson is entitled 'Suffragettes busy at work in Stromness'. Bina Cursiter is likely the woman on the left. (Orkney Library and Archive RHR5171)

In December 1914, a report was sent to *The Common Cause* the newspaper of the movement to say, "*The Orcadian Suffrage Society is doing a good deal of useful work at present. Our secretary, Mrs James Cursiter has been able to raise funds to the extent of £25 for the "Scottish Women's Hospital" for Foreign Service, also £8 for our National Emergency Hospital.*" This shows that the Orkney Society was switching their focus into supporting the war effort.

In 1916, when Bina was 61, she and her husband and daughter moved back to Edinburgh. In recognition of all her hard work building up the membership she was presented with a gold wristlet watch by her fellow OWSS members. The membership by then had risen to 100.

In Edinburgh, her enthusiasm did not wane. She became a member of the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service and was a keen supporter of the Elsie Inglis Hospitals for women and children. Her daughter Lizzie, known as "*a gifted young woman*" also campaigned with her mother.

Thanks possibly to her early life in Hungary and association with friends of Lajos Kossuth who was known as "Hungary's greatest patriot and orator", Bina was inspired to campaign for reform. Her enthusiasm for the cause of gaining the vote for women won over the people of Orkney and increased the membership every year. The Orkney Women's Suffrage Society continued until the vote for women was won in 1918.

In 1920, Mrs Jacobina Cursiter is listed on the Electoral Register in Edinburgh.

The Fereday Prize

Recently, Dr Ray Fereday sent us some valuable information on the origins of the Fereday Prize, which made us realise our website has been wrong for some time, saying it was set up by Ray Fereday, Principal Teacher of History at Kirkwall Grammar School (KGS) from June 1967 to October 1984. It was in fact set up by Willie Thomson, former Rector of KGS. Here is what Dr Fereday says on the matter.

Origins of the Fereday Prize by Ray Fereday

In the beginning, as in so many cultural and educational matters, there was Ernest Walker Marwick, with his great knowledge of Orkney past and present. I came, learned from him and tried to repay him in kind. Thus in 1967-8, I decided to know more about old watermills, so I sent out a questionnaire via a dozen selected pupils, asking them to give a question sheet to any appropriate local person they or their parents knew who might provide the answers for their parish or island. They obtained much useful information.

In every year I asked individual pupils to find out snippets of local history about particular buildings, farms or past events. Things were always cropping up in class if I asked for local examples of historical change. I praised pupils highly if they could teach me anything of interest. Ernest Marwick was glad to see any crumbs of historical information. Sometimes he used them to enrich his weekly column in The Orcadian. He also mentioned these scraps of historical detail to local people and visiting professors who might be interested.

Ernest Marwick died in July 1977, but William P. L. Thomson had become Rector of Kirkwall Grammar School in 1971, was soon very interested in Orkney's past and was inspired to start writing books, including a much needed History of Orkney. He was appreciative of my researches in the archives and pleased at my asking pupils and parents to be conduits and sources of local history.

In 1981, I experimented with an Easter Holiday Local History Homework for all the second year KGS pupils. They had to write one page – more if they wished – about historical information provided by older people. I suggested they asked for such things as eyewitness accounts of events that could not be reported in The Orcadian in wartime, old photographs and letters from the attic, old furniture, old buildings, ruins etc. The information about the past had to be original, unpublished and interesting. I and Willie Thomson were happy to glance through this homework. Most of the responses handed in, even one page efforts, were interesting and worth reading.

After I left KGS, William P. L. Thomson, headmaster and historian, was determined to continue the annual Local History Homework for second year pupils. Indeed, he had the Orkney Heritage Society organise The Fereday Prize competition and assess entries from all Orkney's secondary schools. I was greatly honoured to hear that the new scheme had been named after me; but this enlarged successor to my experimental work was created by Willie and the OHS. It has survived and flourished for decades, thanks to many able and wonderfully dedicated volunteers, including the local historian, Sheena Wenham.

Indeed, a special thank you must be given to Sheena Wenham, who after many years of organising the competition, has this year stood down. Tom Rendall has taken over her duties. Thanks also to this year's judges, Andrea Massey and Neil Kermod.

2018 PRIZEWINNERS

First Prize Kirkwall:

And Overall Winner.

Megan Waterson

Has Westray Processors been of economic benefit to Westray?

First Prize Stromness:

Charlie Fulton

Why is there such a strong tradition of Home Brew in Orkney?

Second Prize Stromness: **Jamie Barbour**
History of Athletics in Orkney

Second Prize Kirkwall: **Courtney Russell**
Just Dance

Third Prize Stromness: **Gareth McLaughlin**
Men of Harray

Third Prize Kirkwall: **Josie Groat**
The History of the Drill Hall

Very Highly Commended: **Aimee Sinclair**, The Stromness Shops; **Keighley Clark**, The Battle of Jutland in Orkney; **Daisy Beckwith-Wyman**, The history of radio in Orkney; **Zoe Hourston**, Kirbister Farm Museum; **Ethank Johnston**, Barony Mills; **Ava Hamilton**, Gorn Farm; **Daniel Kirkpatrick**, What makes Yesnaby special place?; **Jemma Montgomery**, Junior Inter-County; **Erika Poke**, Sandwick Parish F C; **Nairn Hall**, How significant was the find of the Orkney Venus to the Island of Westray?; **Ewan Howe**, Coast Defence Batteries; **Abbey Budge**, Who started the Co-operative now known as the Workshop and the Loft Gallery?; **Rosanne Copland**, Witchcraft in Orkney; **Alex Muir**, Geramount; **Kate Friel**, Rousay School: A History; **Emma Rendall**, The Otter Bank; **Robbie Kirkpatrick**, Tom Ward: The First Orcadian Olympian; **Alex Cooper**, How did the Nicolson Fleet evolve through the years?; **Aidan Brown**, How has Hatston Evolved over the Years?

ORKNEY HERITAGE SOCIETY EYNHALLOW TRIP 2018

Subject to weather conditions, this year's **Eynhallow Trip** will take place on **Wednesday 11th July**, leaving Tingwall Pier at **7.30pm** and **returning from Eynhallow at 1015pm**. **Check in at 7pm**. There is a standby date of Thursday 12th July in case of bad weather.

Cost is £25 per adult and £15 for under 12s. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. No concessions as this is a Society Charter.

Tickets can be obtained from the Orkney Heritage Society website - www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/ohs

There are no refunds unless the trip is cancelled by the Society.

As usual we will be accompanied by expert guides who will describe the archaeology and natural history of the island. There are no roads on this uninhabited island, therefore suitable footwear is essential.

NO DOGS are permitted as this is a Bird Sanctuary.

If in doubt about the weather, telephone Tingwall Office 751 360 within office hours to confirm sailing.



Photo: Kim Burns. MV *Eynhallow* arriving to take passengers home.

The Ward, Deerness, World War II Site of Military Significance by James Wylie, late of Seatter Farm, Deerness.

From the outbreak of World War II in 1939, early warning of the movement of enemy aircraft was based on Chain Home systems of Radio Direction Finding (RDF) or radar, as it became known, a technique which had been developed in secret since 1935. Forming part of an East Coast Chain Home series which provided long-range detection, two stations were installed in Orkney, one at Netherbutton on East Mainland, about 9.6km south of Kirkwall, and another at Whale Head, close to the north-eastern tip of Sanday. The main features of the stations were the receiver blocks and transmitter blocks with their associated masts and generators for the electricity power supply. In order to remain operational in the event of attack or damage, most Chain Home stations, including the two Orkney sites, also had standby generators and held duplicate equipment in reserve installations which were described as buried or remote. Fuller coverage of Orkney was also provided by a small

number of Chain Home Low and Chain Home Extra Low stations, which, as their names imply, were designed to detect low-flying aircraft operating below the range of the Chain Home system.



World War II Chain Home Extra Low Radar Station

This unremarkable little building, built of rendered brickwork with a single-pitch corrugated roof, stands at one end of a low walled enclosure, now filled with rubbish but originally designed to accommodate the gantry and aerial of a Chain Home Extra Low radar unit, supplementing the coverage provided by the Chain Home Low installation on this commanding hilltop site.



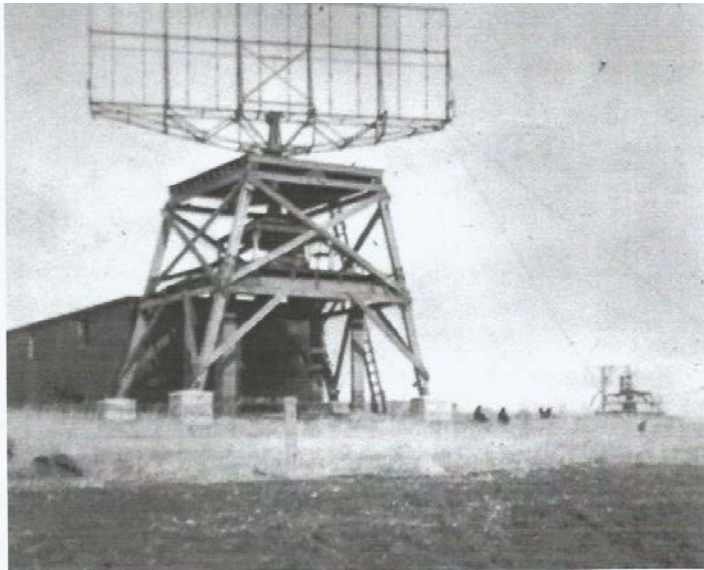
World War II Chain Home Extra Low Radar Station

This copy of a photograph of a horse and hay-cart taken by the local farmer, probably in 1946, shows, in the background, the Chain Home Extra Low station in its immediate post-war condition, complete with gantry and radar aerials, the transmitter/receiver block in its dark wartime colours and, beyond, another communications mast.

The concrete blocks visible in the rough grass are the bases of the gantry on which Chain Home Low radar aerials were mounted. They stand at the lower end of a combined transmitter and receiver block which is just visible on the right. It was built, probably in 1942, to replace earlier units on this commanding hilltop site in the centre of the Deerness peninsula.



Gantry Bases



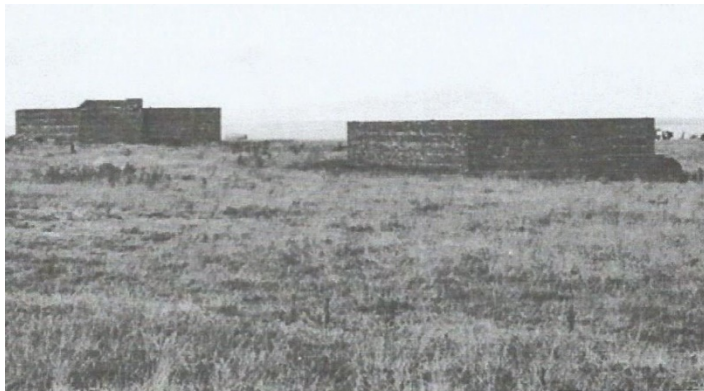
Gantry and Radar Aerials

This copy of a photograph taken by the local farmer, probably in 1946, shows the gantry and radar aerials, still complete in their immediate post-war state, mounted on concrete bases at the lower end of the transmitter/receiver block. In the right background is an indistinct, distant view of the gantry of a Chain Home Extra Low unit.

This large, brick-built structure, partly enclosed within the remains of a surrounding blast-wall, served as the power house for this Chain Home Low radar station at Deerness. It contained the diesel generators which provided the essential electricity supply to successive units on this site.



Power House



Receiver and Transmitter Shelters

These brick-built shelters represent the enclosure or blast-walls which contained the first-phase transmitter and receiver Chain Home Low radar units installed on this hilltop site. In early wartime stations of this type the two sets of gantries - and their respective timber or brick-built huts beneath - were generally spaced between 30m and 60m apart. They were replaced here as elsewhere, probably in 1942, by a combined transmitter and receiver block and associated aerial array.



Transmitter / Receiver Block

This view shows the upper end of a combined transmitter and receiver block which was built, probably in 1942, to replace earlier units on this hilltop site. Typical of such Chain Home Low installations, it is a single-storied structure of rendered brickwork with blast-walled enclosing porches protecting the entrances at each end of the building.

Immediately behind this viewpoint is one of the three underground bunkers which were built in Orkney in 1975 as Royal Observer Corps (ROC) monitoring posts and were manned until the ROC was stood down in 1991. The bunker was part of a national network of Royal Observer Corps (ROC) nuclear monitoring posts incorporated into the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (UKWMO), with the location reference Deerness Orkney HY56910743. In the East Mainland of Orkney, this Chain Home Low installation - ROC Post Deerness HY56910743 - is located on Ward Hill, situated on high ground to the rear of Seatter Farm, Deerness.

At the heart of the Orkney archipelago, Scapa Flow was the main fleet anchorage for the Royal Navy during both World Wars. Its vital importance led to the creation of one of the most concentrated defence networks in Britain.

Murdoch MacKenzie - The Orcadian Father of Hydrography by Neil Kermode

Murdoch Mackenzie was born near Kirkwall in 1712. After going away to Edinburgh University and studying under Professor Colin MacLaurin he returned to Orkney and got a job as a school teacher at Kirkwall Grammar School. However, it is for his remarkably precise surveys of the waters off Orkney and his enduring contribution to nautical charts around the world that mean he can justifiably be claimed the 'father of hydrographic surveying'.

Through his works he has prevented the loss of countless lives at sea. But who has heard of him?

His work:

When the 14th Earl of Morton obtained an act of parliament to grant Orkney and Shetland to himself in 1742 one of his first acts was to commission a survey of the county. He was close friends with Prof MacLaurin and so it was inevitable that his ex-pupil's name would have come up. At some point in the proceedings it was decided to survey the sea around the isles too.

There is not enough space in this newsletter to fully explain his techniques but suffice it to say that Murdoch executed a remarkable survey of Orkney to unprecedented levels of accuracy. This involved setting out his baseline across the frozen surface of Harray Loch from near Hourston to the northern bridge of the isthmus between the Ring of Brodgar and the Standing Stones of Stenness. From here he then set up survey points on hills across Orkney and, at night, proceeded to survey from one to another and thence accurately locate the details and shapes of the mainland and islands.

Then came the intellectual leap because once he accurately knew where headlands really were relative to each-other, he could then turn his attention to the water between them. By measuring features in the sea from the land, it allowed the accuracy of land surveying to be taken out onto the water. By placing buoys at sea on key features such as a reef or rock and measuring their position from several land-based stations simultaneously the position of a reef can be fixed nearly as accurately as a field boundary or a standing stone is on land.

Murdoch also took the whole thing several steps further. Not only did he mark these threats, such as reefs and rocks, he also noted the safe areas for both passage and anchorage. The latter marked on his charts by an anchor, the former by a dotted line. But he also demonstrated a practical grasp of the needs of mariners because he provided information on other features upon which they relied: depth, sea-bed composition and the set of the tides. All of these features were concisely conveyed by symbols.

Murdoch's charts were so accurate that the Admiralty took an interest and commissioned him to survey elsewhere. However, the most remarkable thing is that the symbols he chose and used in his 1750 charts have endured to this day. His symbols are now found on charts across the world!

Meridian:

Any chart when it is produced needs to have a reference. This helps when drafting as the mosaic of detail can then be laid out systematically across the available chart area. It is important to remember that Murdoch had no other survey to relate his work to (the triangulation of the UK was still 33 years away from starting) and establishing a base line in the middle of a survey is the norm when undertaking isolated work. Murdoch's chart was no different and he chose his line to run north-south through Kirkwall, probably through the Cathedral. The meridian line on his chart therefore bisects Kirkwall Bay.

It is interesting to note that Murdoch's zero meridian was actually established 101 years before the present Greenwich Meridian. There had been 'royal meridians' before 1750, but they kept moving them as more accurate observatories were built at Greenwich.

We can therefore say that his 1750 chart actually shows Kirkwall as the centre of his chart, if not the centre of the world as we now know it to be!

An opportunity to celebrate:

It seems such a shame that the man who saved the lives of countless mariners through his mapping of the sea-bed, and his approach to visualising it, is largely unknown in Orkney or indeed further afield.

To rectify this; Orkney Heritage Society has applied to Historic Environment Scotland for one of its plaques to mark Murdoch's achievement and, having received the support of OIC it is planned to put it at a suitable location on the new Kirkwall sea-wall to mark Murdoch's Meridian.

Information boards near the plaque will give Orcadians and visitors alike an insight into the remarkable work of this imaginative school teacher and explain how his ideas have spread across the world.

Board of Orkney Heritage Society 2018



Photo: Andy Hollinrake

Back Row, left to right; Andy Hollinrake, John White, Hayley Green, Tom Rendall, David Murdoch, Neil Kermode. Front Row, left to right; Lucy Gibbon, Spencer Rosie, Sheena Wenham, Elizabeth Corsie.

Missing from the photo: Sandy Firth, Anne Marwick and Christopher Gee.

NEW ORKNEY ANTIQUARIAN JOURNAL VOLUME 8

To Be Launched In The
St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall
at 7.00pm on Tuesday 4th September 2018

Volume 8 will celebrate 50 years of Orkney Heritage Society and be a tribute to the historian and former editor of the New Orkney Antiquarian Journal, William P. L. Thomson.

Authors include Sarah Jane Gibbon, Barbara E. Crawford, Leslie Burgher, James M. Irvine, Jocelyn Rendall, Sheila Garson, Sheena Wenham, Peter D. Anderson, Ray P. Fereday, Spencer J. Rosie and Brian Smith.