
"Roond About Birsay"

News for and by the people in Birsay

January 2003



Issue 22

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Editorial

Well folks, here we are again with the first issue for 2003. Once again, packed with articles and information that will keep you going until the next issue. First of all, we would like to wish all our readers a very happy and prosperous New Year. Having said that, there is nothing much more to add so we will just remind you to keep sending in anything you think might be of interest to the people "Roond about Birsay" and we will keep on printing it.

Johnny Johnston - Co-editors - Morag Spence



BARONY MILLS

Yet again, visitors to the Mill have exceeded a thousand in numbers, indicating the value of the Mill as a tourist attraction and rewarding the work of Rae and Jimmy. Meal and grain sales remain strong and look set to grow in the coming year.

Mrs. Furblack, C.A.T. to the Mill, reports the number of mice have fallen dramatically this winter. She attributes this to the sea-container used to store grain outside the Mill. However, she is undecided whether or not her 'personal meal mill' will benefit.



RECIPES PLEASE! If you have any new recipes using beremeal: bere bread, crumble topping for pies or casseroles, biscuits, etc. please call Sara (721-293). We are collecting recipes for The Bere Essentials Cookery booklet. Have you tried

Argo's new bere cakes and bere pizza or Wylie's bere biscuits - all delicious!

SHIPWRECKS: Tommy Matches is collecting information on shipwrecks along our coast. In particular, does anyone recall stories about the 'Annel' wrecked on Klivvith Rock, Marwick c. 1870 or the 'Janus', stranded about 1900-1910? Please call Tommy (721-369) or leave a message with the BHT secretary (721-293).

WEBSITE: We are improving our Birsay website and adding directory and sales pages. Soon the St Magnus Church Birsay Trust will be selling their unique jewellery worldwide and Birsay Heritage Trust will be selling beremeal throughout the UK. Best of all everyone will be able to learn about the history and treasures of Birsay. The current website address is: www.birsay.org.uk. We hope to have all the new information on-line by mid-March.

Frank Zabriskie



Councillor Chat

May I wish all the people in Birsay a happy and prosperous year in 2003.

This will be the last newsletter before the local government elections in May this year. It has been a privilege to act as the Councillor for the people in Birsay and Dounby. I am often asked if I enjoy being a councillor and I have to say yes, although I would qualify it by saying that there are good days and not-so-good days. I hope I have reflected your aspirations in the Council and represented you as individuals when this was necessary. I think the strength of the Council is the fact that we are all independent councillors, not beholden to a political party, and represent people who we know and live among. Why our MSP wants to foist proportional representation on us I do not understand. PR is appropriate where the party system exists but this does not apply to Orkney.

The past 4 years of this Council have been very active. It was a major achievement to complete the extension to the Dounby Community School- this has been a great benefit to members of the community of all ages. The Dounby Residential Home (we will need a name for the home; any ideas let me know) for the elderly is in the final planning stage and we hope to have a public meeting in the next 2 months. The new creamery, the extension to the abattoir, the new piers in Stromness and Kirkwall and the new agronomy institute at the Orkney College will be of long term benefit to the economy of Orkney. The new library will ensure a continuation of a service which has a very long history in Orkney but will be brought up to date with modern technology. I would like to think that the basic services which we are liable to take for granted are at an acceptable standard viz. our schools and education system, the state of our roads, the garbage collection, the care of the elderly either in their homes or in residential care, the care of the disabled children who need protection and our ability to give shelter to those who are made homeless. If the level of service is not acceptable contact the Council and if no response then let me know. I would like to thank the members of the



Community Council for their help and support throughout the 4 years.

The one outstanding issue which has not yet been resolved is the submissions by myself and the Community Council on the siting of houses in the parish of Birsay. I attended the Local Plan enquiry held in Stromness and made my case to the Reporter who will make a recommendation to the Council in a couple of months. As

well as attending the hearing I made a written submission to the Reporter. Should anyone want a copy please let me know.



Some of you will be wondering what was the outcome of the Birsay Bus questionnaire. The survey demonstrated a desire to have improved public transport for the parish especially for the young and the elderly (Thanks to all those who completed the survey papers). Unfortunately we have not progressed this as we have been hoping that the government will make changes to the laws governing the operation of bus services. I never imagined the rules and regulations that exist pertaining to the operation of a bus service by a community, e.g. if you wish to do it on a "dial a bus" basis then only members can use it, otherwise you need to have a timetable published and this must be done weeks in advance and makes any changes very difficult. In order to avoid these restrictions the drivers would need to be volunteers. So you can see it is not as easy as once thought. However I believe it is the intention of the government to relax some of the more bureaucratic restrictions sometime in the future - hopefully the near future.

Finally thank you all for your support and encouragement over the past 4 years.

For this edition of the newsletter I have picked on the Technical Services Department for a summary of their activities.

Department of Technical Services

The Department is involved in a great variety of activities from the construction and maintenance of piers, airfields, buildings and roads to the collection of domestic refuse and arranging for its disposal, to the control of town centre car parks and street cleansing to the provision of burial ground services, grounds maintenance and building cleaning. The employees of the Technical Services Department provide services that touch the lives of the people of Orkney and those who visit the Islands.

Services are provided by a total of 320 employees including those in Orkneydirect. The revenue funds managed by the Department are in the order of £21 Million. This sum includes the operating budget of Orkneydirect. Departmental employees are currently managing capital projects to the approximate value of £29 Million.

The Department provides vital front line services. Those who drive the winter gritters for example are backed by a dedicated support team. The department's professional, technical and administrative employees pull together to deliver large projects such as the new library in Kirkwall and the pier improvements at Stromness and Kirkwall. That said, the Council considers that a core responsibility is to provide and organise the day to day services such as refuse collection, street cleansing, waste disposal, street lighting repairs, road and footpath defect repairs, drainage maintenance, burial ground administration and maintenance, grass cutting and Council buildings maintenance which are very important locally. These services may seem mundane but I believe that they are very important to the well being of the local community.

The Department provides advice to the Council on a wide variety of technical issues and thus helps to shape policy. Examples include the energy management of Council's buildings, traffic management, road user and pedestrian safety and coastal protection.

The Department's employees have prime responsibility for commissioning the County's transportation infrastructure and the Council's buildings. Our engineers, architects, quantity surveyors and technical employees also design many projects and in certain cases the Council's own employees (Orkneydirect) undertake the construction.

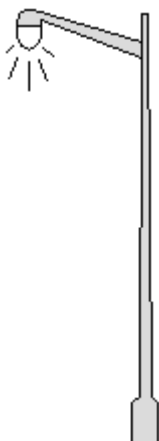
During this year the Council formed a corporate property division within the Department of

Technical Services to provide comprehensive property management and development service for all of the Council's Departments. The development of the harbours at Hatston and Stromness for the new Northern Isles Lifeline Ferry Service has proved a great challenge.

Operating a road stone quarry at Cursiter Quarry, Finstown and "an over 30 months" cattle culling centre at Hatston are two of the lesser known activities carried out by the Department of Technical Services.

Some of the challenges ahead for the Department include the need to provide the Council with advice on the development of waste minimisation and recycling policies.

Finally please note the following details of the Department's emergency procedures. The employees provide "out of hours" emergency response services throughout the year. The emergency service provided for the Council's many buildings is also worthy of mention. These services can be accessed out of hours on the following telephone numbers: -



For roads and lighting emergencies, including difficulties caused by severe weather, please call the Police on 872241. Telephoning 873430 can access an emergency response for Council buildings and houses. Street lighting faults, roads and footway defects can be reported between 9 am and 5 pm Monday to Friday on 873535 extension 2325. At all other times please call 876338 and leave details of the fault on the answering machine. Lighting and roads faults can also be logged on the Council's web site www.orkney.gov.uk

Keith Johnson

Some statistics which may help to give an idea of the scale of the department:-

- roads looked after	606 miles (976 km)
- no. of street lights	2500
- power consumption of street lights	700,000 kilowatt-hours (approx)
- cost of electricity for lights	£32,000
- no of properties maintained	1400 (includes approx. 900 Council houses)
- stone produced at quarry	62,000 tonnes
- bitumen/stone produced	26,000 tonnes
- total waste collected	11579 tonnes.
- no of island airfields	6 (on each airfield there is at least one stone runway.)



Information from the Dounby Centre

The new Centre continues to go from strength to strength. Now that the Winter Programme is up and running - the centre is full most nights, come along! - there is sure to be an activity of interest to each of you.



Some remarks on the way that the Committee is running the Centre might be of interest: at the moment the Committee has contracted out the Sports & Leisure side of the Dounby Centre to the Picky Centre. This provides us with access to all the skills and assets that Picky has i.e. coaches, training courses and all the beaurocratic services that a modern leisure complex requires - Health and Safety rules, screening of staff etc. Meanwhile the old Dounby Centre arrangement with centre groups, keyholders and leaders runs in tandem. So far this slightly complex system seems to be working and may eventually merge some way down the road.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions or problems, and we will do our best to help.

A Good New Year to you all.

Malcolm Beaton



Birsay, Harray & Sandwick Churches

"One Day.....

Youngsters will learn words they will not understand.

Children from India will ask: What is hunger?

Children from Alabama will ask: What is racial segregation?

Children from Hiroshima will ask: What is an atomic bomb?

Children at school will ask: What is war?

You will answer them.

You will tell them: Those words are not used any more; like stage coaches, galleys or slavery - words no longer meaningful.

That is why they have been removed from dictionaries." (Martin Luther King)

Time is a curious thing: it either stands still or races past. Very rarely do we feel things move at the right speed. When we enjoy ourselves time slips by at lightning speed. When we are sore or waiting time seems to be slower than a snail in a race.



So we try and speed time up by filling our day with activity and busyness and hardly stop to take a breath. In spite of all modern progress, inventions, labour saving devices and gadgets we are busier than ever, more in a hurry and often it is the older folk and the children who suffer for it. Yet most folk want to do their bit for making the world a better place. However we could easily get despondent - the news is full of stories of murder and people treating each other badly, nations threatening each other with war. Is it worth bothering? Can we do anything?

At the beginning of a new year I would like to encourage you and me to bother. For we are on the way, not arrived yet, with lots to do, but we are on the way. And when we "bother", work for good and take care of each other and justice in the world then a curious thing will happen: time will slow down to its right speed, our souls take breath and our minds relax. Call it centring yourself, call it worshipping or meditating.....

So let's walk together, not run nor stop, but walk and work together for love to shape our community and the world.

Want a hand with this? Come to church on a Sunday at 11am either in Twatt, Harray or Sandwick. Posters in shops or Post Offices, or Radio Orkney's 'What's On Diary' on Friday will tell you where we are. The children are always welcome and there will be activities laid on for them during school term time. We have begun to enjoy a cup of tea with each other after the service in Twatt and Sandwick. For parking reasons we do this at Harray before the service from 10am onwards. This is proving a nice time for a chat with friends and neighbours.

We are always pleased to see new faces at the church and are hoping to find new people to join the church. So please consider joining and come to the first of four classes exploring this possibility. We meet in the Twatt Church Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15 January 2003. You are most welcome to come.

I wish you and your family a happy and prosperous New Year, God's blessing on your way.

Rev Andrea Price

The Manse, North Bigging, Dounby

Tel. 771803



Birsay Guild

The Womens Guild meet in the church hall on the second Thursday in each month. In September, we had a planning meeting; also, Ethel Young told stories and showed slides of Hoy. The usual open meeting with sales tables was held in November, when we were entertained by DRAM from Deerness. A happy meeting was spent in Sandwick in December, at which Harray, Sandwick and Birsay Guilds united. In January we had Ida & Balfour Wylie giving us a talk on their trip to Brazil. In February, Rev and Mrs Brown will tell us of their holiday in Crete; and in March it's the AGM, with a talk by Rev Fraser MacNaughton. In April we plan to entertain visitors from the East Kirk Guild.



A warm welcome is extended to anyone who would like to join our meetings.

Margaret Spence



BIRSAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Well, here we are in 2003, a new year with the same old faces round the Community Council table. That, of course, could all change soon since this is election year and all you good people out there who are fed up of the mess we make of trying to do what we believe is best for our parish can now stand for election and show us how it should have been done all along!

I mentioned in the last issue about the Public Inquiry that was going to be held into the objections to the Orkney Development Plan. This was held in December and both Councillor Keith Johnson and myself were there to present our case. We did our best and it proved to be quite a stressful morning's work so all we can do now is wait for the decisions. We don't know exactly when that will be but it will be sometime in the Spring time, we believe.



We did manage to win one battle recently. In our January 2002 issue, I mentioned the boat launching slip we constructed at the Point of Buckquoy and the fact that the Crown Office was charging us an annual rent for it. We felt that they had no right to do this and have been engaged in a lengthy argument with them ever since. Finally, after I spent a large part of a Sunday afternoon going round the whole slip photographing it from every angle to prove how little shore it actually covered (and causing great puzzlement among the visitors out there who obviously thought I had finally gone completely mad) we won our case and got our money back. We are very grateful to Jim Wallace for the assistance he gave us.

Once again there was a most successful Tree Lighting ceremony in Dounby on 6th December, a joint project by Sandwick, Harray & Stenness and Birsay Community Councils. This event is gaining in popularity every year and we hope to continue and expand on it. We hope that OIC will be able to find some funding to provide some more lights etc. for another year since it is fairly expensive and we depend greatly on the generosity of many of the local people to make it the success it is.



I also mentioned the condition of the Whalebone, but we have not made any progress on that at the moment. We are hoping to have a meeting with the Heritage Officer about it soon and we will see what can be done to

preserve it.

Apart from that, we are mostly concerned with what you might call routine matters, things which go on all the time. These include people or groups applying for grant aid, reporting potholes in roads and ditches needing cleaned, signs needing replacement and many other things. We have also ordered new gates for the Kirkyard, since the existing ones have been falling to pieces for a long time. We hope they will soon be in place.

As ever, if anyone has anything they want to bring up, please don't hesitate to contact us.

John W. Johnston - Chairman.



IT'S IN THE STARS

Spring begins 21 March, 2003 at 1am. Immediately thereafter warm clear calm weather follows. Which prediction would you believe?

VENUS: Have you seen the very bright morning star? She's Venus, she rises about 6am, and is radiant at 8am. Look to the southeast.



In the evening watch Orion, the Hunter, leap over the horizon; by 10pm he will be due south, about four hand's breadth above the horizon. He looks like a big hour-glass, with a belt of three stars at his waist. The jewel of his sword is the famous Great Nebula which you can see with binoculars or a small telescope.

SATURN: North of Orion (that is, toward the North Star) by another three or four hand's breadth is Saturn looking very bright and handsome. With a telescope, you can see the rings which are tilted for their best view right now.

JUPITER can be seen in the northeast in the early evening, and is visible all night. He is just east of the sickle-like head of Leo. On 2 February, Jupiter is in "opposition" meaning he is directly opposite the Sun as viewed from the Earth, or more simply, due south at midnight. With binoculars, you can see the brightest four satellites which are fun to watch, because they move so much from night to night.

******* Set your Alarm Clock *******



At sunrise, 31 May this year there is an ANNULAR ECLIPSE of the SUN. (Sunrise occurs about 4:43am Summer Time on this day.) When a total eclipse of the Sun occurs the Moon completely blocks the Sun. This time, however, the Moon is farther from the Earth than usual, and therefore, it will look a bit smaller to us. We would not notice this unless we were to compare the Moon's apparent size with the Sun's, but of course, that is exactly what happens during an eclipse. This year the Moon's disc is too small to cover the entire Sun, and we will see a black Moon and a narrow bright ring, or annulus, around it. The effect lasts about one minute only, but the so-called partial phases last almost an hour longer. Weather permitting!

There is an excellent website with lots information about this eclipse and many more yet to come:

<http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse>

There you will discover that there will be a TOTAL LUNAR ECLIPSE on 16 May, lasting from about 4:14 to 5:07 AM BST.

Frank Zabriskie



Birsay Church Flower Club

Since the last newsletter the Birsay Flower club has gone from strength to strength: in August, members produced flower arrangements under the guidance and inspiration of Bertha Mainland on the topic "Summer Glory", illustrating the vibrant colours and sweet smells of this time of year; Jean Harvey's skills and imagination inspired us at our "Harvest Thanksgiving" meeting in September; in October, "The Four F's - Feathers, Flowers, Fruit and Foliage" was the brainchild of Maureen Venables.

Members also took part in a combined meeting in Finstown - where the topic was "Pantomime", and held an Open Night in November, which consisted of a presentation by Sandra Linklater using her skills to produce arrangements from artificial, fresh and natural materials on the theme "Looking to Christmas" and a sales table: a delicious supper rounded off the meeting.

The year was brought to an end when we enjoyed a successful and happy Christmas party.

The new year offers a varied programme:-

Jan 21st: Irebana with Barbara Nieto

Feb 18th: 'Floramondi' - video of the 7th World Flower Show held in Glasgow in 2002.

Mar 18th: 'Get Ahead' - make a headdress or a bonnet with Cindy Miller.



April 10th: 'A Breath of Spring' with Emilie Kirkness, including tips on conditioning flowers.

May 20th: Mary Watson takes us 'Around the World'. This meeting includes a swap-shop.

June 17th: AGM followed by 'Pedestals' with Esther Sclater.

June/July: Club outing to be arranged.

Meeting are held in the Twatt Church hall on the third Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm.

Visitors to the area and new members are always made very welcome.

C Miller

Secretary



Advertise on the Internet

The Birsay Heritage Trust is in the process of expanding their website: www.birsay.org.uk and are adding a page called "Directory of Shops and Services in Birsay." If you would like to advertise on this page, please send us the following information:

1. Category: Accommodation, Agricultural Business, Automobile Service, Boat Hire, Crafts, Galleries, Fishing, Tours, Restaurants, Tea Rooms, Shops, etc. If you do not find a category that suits you, we will create a new category.
2. Name of business
3. Address

4. Telephone number, fax number and /or website address
5. Description

There are up to five lines (or 50 words) available per entry.

Example under category Accommodation:

Birsay Self-catering Cottages - Mr. Sven Thorfin, Valhalla, Birsay, Orkney, KW17 1XX, 01856 721000 or fax 01856 721001. Available all year, well appointed longhouses with central fire, bench beds with furs, well insulated, strong sod roofs, magnificent view of bay, parking for longboats and peats for fire all included.

Example under category Boat Hire:

Birsay Longboats - Mr. Sven Thorfin, Valhalla, Birsay, Orkney, KW17 1XX, 01856 721000 or fax 01856 721001. Beautifully carved dragon head longboats for fishing or touring isles. Manned by 8 oarsmen if required. Available by the hour or day. Visit our website for a virtual tour: birsaylongboats.co.uk.



The initial set up charge is £10 for the first year and following years just £5. Your advertisement can be changed at no extra charge.

Please send your information to Frank Zabriskie, Secretary, Birsay Heritage Trust, Harpsa, Birsay KW17 2ND. If you have any questions, call Frank at 721 293. We would like to have all advertisement information ASAP so we can have it on line as soon as possible.



Our Grandparents – Class 2 Dounby Primary

My gran has got curly hair. She likes baking cakes with me. I love her and of course pappa too. She plays with me. She gives me sweets. Gran has a toy dog. I pretend it's a real one. I take it walks. She is funny too.



My great grandad that died before me and Murray was born loved marmalade. He could eat 7 jars of marmalade a day. If he felt well he loved sitting down and watching tv.



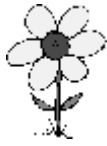
My grandad lives in Dounby and he likes farming. He feeds the cows with the feeder wagon. There is doors for the silage for the cows to eat and there is straw mixed with the silage. I like working with him and I like playing games with him.

My grandad lives down below our house. I like to work with him. I get to drive the tractor with nobody on it. We play Scooby Doo Thrills and Spills game.

My grandad Costa lives in Evie. He has flat hair. He watches TV a lot and he wears glasses to read. I like talking to him. He had a heart attack in the holidays. Every Monday he goes to



the town. Everyday after we've fed the kye we go in to talk to him. He gives us sweeties and we talk to him. He says come in. Dad gives him a salmon. I love him and he likes me.



My Granny lives in Edinburgh. She has got curly hair and has got brown ish hair. She likes gardening and weeding too. She likes making jigsaws with me. I come to her house. She comes to my house. We have lots of fun to gether. I feel happy with her. And she is really beautiful.

My Granny lives in Shetland. She has curly hair and glasses.

I like gardening with her. She likes cooking. She makes good lentil soup.



The St Magnus Church Birsay Trust

The fine weather in summer meant that there was a constant stream of visitors to St Magnus kirk, on some days as early as 8am and as late as 8.30pm. We know from seeing the numbers going into the church, and from the increase in donations and sales of postcards and bookmarks, that the number of visitors was up very considerably, but for some inexplicable reason a smaller proportion of visitors than usual signed the visitors' book: 620 in 2002 compared with 820 in 2001.

The pattern of tourism in Orkney is certainly changing: in 2002 there were hardly any coach tours, but far more people with some form of mobile home. One of the tour operators said that this was a result of the popularity of crossings with the "Pentalina B". Usually a few people from each coach tour sign the book, so this may have had some effect on the number of signatures.



As usual, there were visitors from all over the world: from countries as distant from each other as New Zealand, Japan, the Czech Republic and the Faroe Islands. There seem to be a great many visitors from Australia, and it is noticeable that each year more of the visitors are keen to find out more about their ancestors and their relatives. One such visitor was Alan Loughheed from Queensland, a great-grandson of George Robson, the schoolteacher at the Palace until 1877. Alan had been in Orkney before, but only for a day; this time he had a few days here, and was able to meet some of his relatives at the Palace and to photograph his great-grandfathers' gravestone. He visited the Old Schoolhouse, and also saw the photographs of George Robson which we had in our exhibition on Schools in September 2000. It was interesting to hear from Alan how many of George Robson's descendants in Australia were involved in education. He himself had been a professor of economics at the University of Queensland. He hoped to come back, probably as soon as next year, but sadly he developed pneumonia shortly after his return to Australia and died on September 27th.

Events

We are keen to encourage individuals and organisations to use the church as a venue for events to which it is suited, so we were pleased to give permission for the New Zealand author Cathy Dunsford to give a performance/reading of excerpts from her novels at the end of July. Later, she came back to record some of these excerpts for Grampian Television, before a later performance at Woodwick House. On 29th September the Mayfield Singers gave a recital in St Magnus kirk in support of the talking newspaper, a very deserving cause.

The trustees had asked Sarah Jane Grieve, who is doing a PhD at Orkney College through the University of the Highlands and Islands, to give a talk at some point, and we decided on a date in early September, just after the end of the Orkney Science Festival. She chose as her subject 'The church in saga times', and gave a

fascinating talk, illustrated with slides. We will certainly be inviting Sarah Jane back to speak on other aspects of our history and heritage.

December 16th was the date of a Christmas concert, organised by the Trust but involving several local organisations, in support of the Archie Foundation: Dounby School, who were involved both artistically and musically; the Girl Guides; Birsay SWRI; Birsay Drama Group; Rev. Andrea Price; the Lord Lieutenant of Orkney (a patron of the Archie Foundation) and Mrs Marwick. The church remained open for the rest of the week, and there were a number of visitors whose contributions raised the total collected for the Archie Foundation to £204.

Future Events



Don't miss our St Magnus Day (16th April) service this year: pupils from Firth School are going to present a musical version of the story of St Magnus, which they performed as part of the millennium celebrations. The pupils who took part in the original production will, of course, have moved to Stromness Academy, so there will be a new cast.

On Sunday 27th April we expect to have our usual Jazz Festival service. In 2002 there were only about 10 empty seats in the church. Come along and make sure there are none this year!

We have some ideas for events later in the year, of which we will, of course, give details later, but we would be happy to have your suggestions for events.

You, Bright Magnus Erlendsson...

Our supply of bookmarks, with line drawings by the late Harold Stanley, has come to an end, and we have replaced them with copies of the poem-prayer for peace "You, bright Magnus Erlendsson" by Gilbert Márkus, who gave the address at the St Magnus Day service in 1999. Various people have made comments in the visitors book about this lovely poem: some have asked if copies are available, and I have seen visitors copying it down from the framed version which stands on the reed-organ, so we have had copies made - postcard-sized, beautifully printed on parchment-effect paper. Copies are 50p, if you would like one. One of the most recent comments, made in October, was "Peace in a troubled world you have here. I bought Magnus' poem. Such words are so true."

Jewellery

A small number of items of our jewellery, made by Orkneyinga Silversmiths, and featuring a design from the stained glass window, are now on sale at Dounby Stores.

Bertie Harvey



NEWS FROM ORKNEY VINTAGE CLUB

The 23rd of November, 2002, was the twentieth birthday of Orkney Vintage Club. The greatest achievement has undoubtedly been the establishment of the Rally in Orkney's calendar of events. In August 1983, I can well remember a group of us sitting on a plank supported on two oil-drums in the shed at Walliwall, and wondering if we were wise in going ahead with a rally. Between us, we counted how many cars, tractors, motorcycles and engines we knew about - it came to between 15 and 20. The amazing total of 42 actually turned up on the day (in 2002, there were 198 in the same four categories).

Things have certainly moved on since 1983 and it was with a certain sadness that we came to realise we had outgrown Walliwall. We all have fond memories of the sixteen Walliwall Rallies, but there is no doubt that the move to Orkney Auction Mart in 1999 has allowed us to expand and provide an even more worthwhile day out for the visiting public.

We are always looking for ways to improve things, and our Rally Secretary, Sandy Bremner, deserves great credit for the work he put into producing the first catalogue of exhibitors for the last rally. Each exhibitor also received a brass plate to commemorate the event. After each rally, the committee sit down and make a note of any points that would improve the next event. Last year, there was a poor response to the appeals for motorists to enter the Parade of Vehicles in the ring, and we must certainly improve on this.



Leaving the rally behind, the club had some memorable outings in 'the year that's awa'. The visit to Hoy to see and participate in the launch of the Longhope lifeboat was a definite highlight, as was the trip to Graemsay and walk around the island. One of the road runs ended at Kirbuster Farm Museum, where a barbecue was held. The rain came on quite heavily, and shelter was sought among the trees. Unfortunately, the midges were also sheltering there and were delighted at the 'barbecue' they had on those present. Katrina had to come to the rescue with midgie-cream!

I have just completed our own newsletter, No 20, and it is a bumper 60-page issue with, hopefully, something to interest most members. There are the usual reports on many club events, along with other stories written specially for us. A favourite of mine is Tony Linklater's account of his days at John Scarth's, when he travelled Orkney servicing and repairing Ferguson tractors. It is in two parts and will conclude next year.

It's time to do my usual bit of advertising on behalf of the club! Membership is still £5.00 for adults and £1.00 for those aged sixteen and under. For this, you receive a free newsletter. The membership secretary is William Drever, Newhall, Berstane Road, Kirkwall, KW15 1SZ. I collect memberships and issue newsletters for members in this area, so if any reader wants to join, you can let me know and I can arrange it for you. (Phone 771373)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 'Roond About Birsay' team for the work they do in producing the newsletters, and wish them well in the year ahead.

I have had a look in my 'archives', and thought readers might be interested in another Ploughing Match report. This one goes back 120 years and was reported in *The Orkney & Shetland Telegraph* - Tuesday February 14, 1882.

PLOUGHING MATCH

The annual ploughing match of the West Mainland Agricultural Society took place on the farm of West Quoys on Wednesday. The day was all that could be desired. There was a large turnout of spectators, many of whom had come from a distance. We observed early on the field - Mr Watt of Skaill, the President; and Mr Taylor, How, the Secretary; Mr Drever, Swanney &c., &c. By ten o'clock there were thirty ploughs on the ground. It was often remarked that such a display of fine horses and highly-decorated harness were never before at a match in the West Mainland. At twenty minutes past ten the start was made, and the last ploughman finished his work before 3.00pm. A work of considerable difficulty was before the judges - Messrs Watson, Stromness; Sinclair, Dyke, Evie; and Birse, St Ola who made the following awards:



Ploughing: 1 R Cowper, Isbister, Birsay; 2 G Brown, Hundland, Birsay; 3 J Hepburn, Faval, Birsay; 4 C Wishart, Kierfold, Sandwick; 5 G Corsie, Hyval, Birsay; 6 J Kirkness, Swartland, Sandwick; 7 J Laughton, Voy, Sandwick; 8 P Isbister, Ingsay, Birsay; 9 J Isbister, Ingsay, Birsay; 10 A Linklater, Pow, Sandwick; 11 G Muiriden, Newhall, Birsay; 12 J Johnston, Swanney, Birsay; 13 Geo. Copland, Yeldadee, Sandwick; 14 Wm. Ironside, Bankhead, Sandwick; 15 J Spence, Burnside, Stromness. The last five were merit prizes and three got special prizes.

Grooming: 1 G Muiriden; 2 Wm. Ironside; 3 Wm. Johnston, Howaback, Sandwick; 4 Wm. Walker, Pow, Sandwick; 5 S Robertson, Kirkness, Sandwick; 6 D Swanson, Faval, Sandwick; 7 D Mackenzie, Lyking, Sandwick; 8 S Swanson, Lone, Birsay; 9 Wm. Bias, Glebe, Birsay; 10 S Davidson, Howan, Birsay.

Harness: 1 Wm Ironside; 2 D Swanson; 3 D Mackenzie; 4 P Isbister; 5 G Copland; 6 Wm. Johnston; 7 John Corrigan, Hyval, Sandwick; 8 A Linklater; 9 James Brass, Skaill, Sandwick; 10 S Davidson.

Special Prizes: Best Feering-G Brown, Hundland; Best Finish-R Cowper, Isbister; From Mr Stockan, Aith, a pocket knife (2s 6d) for straightest ploughing, R Cowper; Mrs Garson, Kierfold, a cap (3s) for best feering, G Brown; Mrs Potts, Skaill, a cravat (2s 6d) to youngest ploughman, G Muirden(17); Miss Flett, Skaill, a tie (2s 6d) to the youngest ploughman who has a prize for grooming, G Muirden; Miss Aitken,

Kierfold, a large muffler (2s 6d) to the man with the neatest ends, R Cowper; Miss Anderson, Kierfold, a scarf to man 2nd on merit class, J Johnston, Swanney; From Mr Marwick, Skaill, 2s for best decorated horses, Wm. Ironside; Mr John Maitland, Finstown, 2/6d to youngest married man on the field, Andrew Linklater, Pow; From G S Duthie, Teacher, Birsay, 2s 6d to ploughman with largest family, James Spence, Burnside; From J Murrell, Stromness, 1lb of tea (3s), to oldest married ploughman, G Corsie, Hyval; From J Murrell, $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen tea dishes (gold gilt, 5s), to youngest married ploughman, A Linklater; From J Murrell, a sou'-wester to ploughman farthest from home, J Spence, Burnside, Stromness; From Wylie & Robertson, Stromness, a bonnet (3s 6d) to the youngest ploughman on the field, G Muirden; From Capt. Miller, Stromness, a pipe (5s) to first man on merit, G Muirden; From J Brown, Stromness, a brush for best groomed horses, G Muirden; From J Brown, Stromness, a knife (2s 6d) for best finish, R Cowper; From J Johnston, Stromness, 1s to the man third in merit, G Copland.

It was dark before the judges got their part of the work finished. To all appearance, their deliberations gave general satisfaction. There were three cheers given for the judges and the same for Mr Watt, President, which brought the day's labours to a close. The ploughmen were plentifully supplied with refreshments throughout the day by Mr & Mrs Cruickshanks.

In the evening a first-class dinner was prepared by Mr Muirden of Newhall, to which over twenty sat down, and a most enjoyable evening was spent. Mr Walker of Pow was in the chair, Mr Flett of the Glebe, Birsay, was croupier. Mr D Stephen read a paper on the land-laws.

Submitted by Harold Esson

P.S. The only definition of *croupier* that I can find in dictionaries is to do with gambling. Can anyone throw some light on this? (H.E.)



The Weather in 2002

Click [here](#) to view table.

You will see from the attached climate data table that we experienced

- higher temperatures than average.
- Rainfall marginally above average
- (wetter than average Jan, Feb, Mar, July, Nov; drier than average May, August, Sept, Dec)
- Sunshine well above average
- (April, May, June Oct. well above average hours)
- Although we had 9 gale days we only had 7 gales. Wind never above 60 knots.

Keith Johnson

