
"Roond About Birsay"

News for and by the people in Birsay

July 2003



Issue 23

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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

That Dear Green Place

As always I felt sad as I stepped off Wishart's brown and yellow bus, wondering how I'd ever survive a whole year till me summer hols in Birsay. At the age of 8, a year was a long 52 weeks, whereas now six decades later, the 52

telescopes into as many days. There was some consolation in the hope we'd visit at other days and we always tried to be in Birsay on New Year's Day, but it wasn't the same as staying over ; it was the company, of course.

Phyllis and Eileen would be waiting for me at Lylie ; the road up to Hillhead was a rough track then, the wild lupins stood brave and tall on both sides right up to the yellow, yellow pow at Newan and beyond, beside dockans, cocks and hens, dandelions, and there'd be right blue tongues and lips as we ate the berries just below Seaview.



Perhaps the country bairns had more fun going home from school in the summer, lingering about the burns and ditches, besides us townies, throwing our schoolbags in, and off to play in a builder's yard, the woodyard, or the smelly old auction mart. A different story in the dark drear stormy days in winter when there was no transport of any kind for country bairns.

It was all fun for me, tramping blankets on a hot summer day; sitting enjoying the best view from Hillhead with a bunch of lettuce, a basin of water, vinegar and sugar; playing shops; running down to Newan for milk, pulling bits of shallots as we passed Maggie's garden; keeping house while Jessie went to help at the neep singling...

While Jock and Charlie pitted their wits and skill trying to beat Jessie and Daavid at the 500 table, we played snap, batchy, spoof, and at bedtime, I Spy and the Minister's Cat.

When the Scottish dance music was on we learned the Eva Three Step, etc. specially for a family wedding in the Barony Hotel. Sad to say, after all me practise when the time came, I wasn't good enough.

Some days we'd set off to torment the miller, passing in by Maggie o' Meeron for a sweetie from her tin on the mantelpiece. We'd tear up and down the mill stairs, looking for shellings (I thought I was looking for real money). This was all thirsty work, especially eating dry oatmeal. So, across to Grannie for a drink of the crystal clear water from the Manse Well, and creamola foam, passing the bink at the back door (where is that bink, Rae?). Back across the road to the smithy and the excitement if Jock Martins was shoeing a horse.



Grannie's stove shone like a black diamond, likely black-leaded daily, where she toasted the oatcakes till they curled. Great bakers, brewers and cookers were all these Birsay ladies, and I wasn't left to forget that the country lasses were just as efficient, and still are. On a famous birthday tea, one cheeky chappie counted 19 items of home bakes on the table, then complained there was no loaf at Hillhead.

Thankfully I'm not dependent on any bus, brown, yellow or blue, and can speed off more or less anytime westwards. So you'll often see me rootin' about in the Garden of Orkney.

Ivy A. Cooper



COUNCILLOR CHAT

First let me thank the people of Birsay and Dounby for their support and confidence in accepting me as their councillor for the next 4 years. It is quite a challenge knowing that a large community are looking to you to represent them and look after their interests in Orkney Islands Council.

I am sure that you will be aware of the funding problems the Council is having and with the present arrangements from the Scottish Executive it is very difficult to progress many of the projects and services we would like to provide to the people of Orkney. If we could get equal funding per person in Orkney to that of Shetland and the Western Isles we could make quite a difference. The Council met with our MSP, Jim Wallace, and we made plain our disquiet at being disadvantaged in comparison with the other island groups and that we expect him to fight our case robustly in the Scottish Executive.

Happily we are able to proceed with the Dounby care home and work should start about the end of July. It is projected to take about 18 months so there will be a bit of disruption in the village but I am sure it will be worth it.



The Department of trade and Industry has started a consultation process about a "Strategic Environmental Assessment" for issuing oil and gas exploration licenses for the waters to the west of Orkney and Shetland. This area meets the Birsay coast line so any incident in the offshore waters could impact on our coast. If anyone would like to see or be involved in the consultation please let me know and I will let you have details.

The Reporter to the Orkney Local Plan inquiry eventually published his findings and he did not support the case that I and the Community Council made to allow Birsay be treated the same as the isles when it comes to the siting of houses. He did not acknowledge the fact that we have a declining population and the need to sustain rural communities as examples of the arguments we put forward. However last week I managed to persuade the Council that they instruct the planning officials to consult the Birsay Community about providing more flexibility in the siting of houses, so we wait the next chapter in this long running saga.

(I noted from the 2001 census that the population of the combined parishes of Birsay and Harray (this used to be a civil parish up to 1929 I believe) has declined 24% in 10 years. I was most surprised at this figure as such a decline is not plainly obvious.)

You may have seen the adverts encouraging people to express their interest in getting Broad Band for e-mail and internet connection. I am sure anyone using the internet will experience the frustrations of the delays in opening pages on the internet. I understand that Broad Band can make a significant difference in the speed of upload and download. Highlands and Islands Enterprise are proposing to make Broad Band available to all communities who show an interest in Broad Band so we want as many people as possible to express an interest.

Send a message to 0800 0272327 or go to <http://www.hie.co.uk/broadband/registration> to express your interest.

One last note; I understand that the new children's playground at the school will be available after about 20 July.

It is a privilege to represent the people of Birsay and Dounby and anyone is welcome to get in touch by telephone (771328), e-mail ak.johnson@btopenworld.com, call past Hundasaeter or ask me to come past your home if there are any issues I can help you with. I believe that a councillor is the advocate for the people who elect them. Issues do not necessarily have to concern the Council but any organisation which is giving you a problem.

For this issue of the newsletter I am including a summary of the work of the education department, which I hope will give you a greater understanding of this important department in the Council.

The Department of Education and Recreation

This department has a much wider remit than just providing schools and teachers, and is responsible for a number of different services which are all important to many different communities and interests in Orkney. The following explains what the Department is responsible for, and what the current priorities are:-

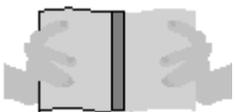
- **School and pre-school education**

The main service aims for school and pre-school education are to provide a happy, caring, inclusive and safe environment in which pupils will achieve their very best - good exam results, enjoyment and success in areas such as sports and the arts, a range of life skills, and the skills and attitudes to become good citizens of the future.

New government funding means that a large number of additional 'projects' are underway to help achieve these aims. Standards in schools are high, and recent inspection reports show that provision is generally very good.

Schools should be attractive, modern, fit-for-purpose places. The Council has recognised the need to maintain school buildings in a good state of repair unlike many other Councils whose buildings have been allowed to deteriorate. There is an ambitious programme of building - recently, a new school was opened in Firth and extensions and refurbishments have taken place at Kirkwall Grammar School, Dounby, Sanday, Papa Westray and Eday. Planned improvements will soon be started in Shapinsay and Glaitness (including improved integrated provision for pupils with special educational needs). A new school is planned for Burray. Future needs for Papdale, Rousay and Stromness Academy are under consideration.

- **Further education**



Orkney College, recently extended to include a base for archaeology and improved art and library facilities, received high praise in its inspection last year. The college continues to attract a large number of learners of all ages, ranging from open learning and short courses to full degree courses. The development of its postgraduate archaeology course and the recently developed agronomy institute are current priorities.

- **Grainshore Training Centre**

Grainshore provides supported training to a small number of clients, including a number with disabilities. This includes general skills training, construction skills, IT and interview skills. Currently it is managed by Orkney College on a pilot basis, and it is hoped that trainees will in future become students of the college.

- **Community and Adult Learning**



Community Education works closely with local community groups to provide facilities and activities appropriate to local needs. Current examples of this partnership arrangement are the establishment of a community learning plan for the West Mainland, the play area at Dounby Community

School which is near completion and the computer learning centre which will open in Autumn.

New premises, The Learning Link in Queen Street, mean that those adults wishing help with basic literacy and numeracy have a place of learning and meeting. There are many adults requiring help, and the priority for the Adult Basic Education service is to attract and retain more learners.

- **Library and Archive Services**

The new Orkney Library and Archive is nearing completion, and will open in October. It will provide enhanced services such as internet access, a local studies centre and additional opening times for the archives and will bring a number of additional services, such as the Biodiversity Records Centre, and the Orkney Family History Society, together in one central, attractive area.

- **Sports, Arts and Recreation**

The Department runs a number of sports centres and recreational facilities, and commissions services from the Pickaquoy Centre. The recent appointment of a sports development officer will mean more support for the wide range of sporting organisations in Orkney.

During July and August community consultation will be taking place on both the draft Sport and Recreation Strategy and Review of Orkney Sports Development Group. These will be launched in the autumn and will provide clarity and priorities for the new Sports Development Service. A Coaching Audit is also being undertaken with sports clubs in order to assess the coaching needs in the County with a view to allocating resources and improving coaching standards. This is being funded through the Islands Forum (sportscotland).

Consultation for Healthy Living Centres is in progress with partners, communities and funding partners and work on these should commence from April 2004.

The Orkney Arts Strategy was launched earlier this year, and involved the public bodies and a wide and representative range of arts organisations and individuals. There is a clear desire to make some improvements to arts venues, improve communications, support smaller arts enterprises, and co-ordinate bids for external funds.

- **Special Projects**

Special Projects continues to provide training opportunities for long-term unemployed while supporting community projects and making real improvements to the Orkney environment.

Overall, the Department budget is £23 million and there are around 850 employees.

Keith Johnson

Hundasaeter





BIRSAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Well, the elections are all over and now we have a brand new Community Council! Or maybe not brand new but ready to face a new session. There has been only one change, as it happens, with Barbara Foulkes deciding not to stand again, due to pressure of other work. We would like to thank her for the work she has put into the Community Council over the many years she has been a member and we wish her all the best in her new career. She has been replaced by Susan Norquoy and we welcome Susan to our Council. I know she will be a valuable member, with much to contribute to the community. The new Community Council therefore consists of the following members:-

Johnny Johnston, Chairman; Kenny Ross, Vice Chairman; Duncan Tullock; Sandy Scarth; Maxwell Tait; Jean Harvey; Susan Norquoy

At the final meeting of the old Council, we met in a rather different venue. Sergeant Davie Mathieson invited us to the recently renovated Police Station in Stromness to see for ourselves the vast improvements which had been carried out there. It was a most interesting evening, with Chief Inspector Mike Cowdry giving us a talk on the aims of the Orkney Area Command and Sergeant Mathieson giving us a guided tour of the premises. We then held our meeting at the Station and we would like to thank all concerned for the invitation to visit.

As for the normal Community Council matters, we continue to make some progress on the various things, roads, drainage etc.

We have now ordered a plaque for Mans Well, to let people know a bit more about its history and we hope to have that in place soon.

All the marker stones at the boundaries of Birsay with other parishes have now had the word BIRSAY painted black. This is a great improvement, as it shows up the name much more clearly. We thank Sandy Scarth for doing the job.



On the very important and worrying subject of a West Mainland Disposal Site, we are still trying. Our Councillor is doing his best to get the scheme off the ground but the problem, as usual, is money. However, it is fast becoming even more important to get a site here. As we predicted, "fly tipping" has begun. Already some loads of scrap have been tipped in the peat banks. This is not just a few items taken up in the boot of a car and thrown out but actual trailer loads of scrap iron. One load, to add insult to injury, has actually been dumped at the end of my own peat bank!! There are at least two more loads which I have seen (and, incidentally, photographed to see if we can find any clue as to the owner) and who knows how many more

will follow and where. If anyone has any information about this, I would be very pleased to hear from them. I am well aware of the problems that exist at the moment in getting rid of scrap, as anyone can see by the number of old cars at my own house, but I do not intend to dump them on someone else's property and I do not see why other people should feel that they can so.

To end on a slightly brighter note, I mentioned last time that we had ordered new gates for the Kirkyard. Well, they are now in place and I am sure everyone will agree that Alan Norquoy has made a lovely job. As always, let any of us know if there is something you think we can help you with.



NEWS FROM ORKNEY VINTAGE CLUB



The Club's first outdoor event of the year was the Tractor Working Day, which this year took place at the historic setting of the Earl's Bu in Orphir. Nineteen tractors took part and it was great to see Birsay represented. Kenny Irvine had travelled from the 'North Side' to the 'South Side' of the West Mainland with his early 1940s Fordson diesel, and it made light work of Jimmy Stevenson's Ransomes Mowtrac 2-

furrow plough.

The next significant event was the Orkney Cavalcade which took place on 23rd May. The chosen route, starting from Kirkwall, took in Tankerness, Deerness, Holm, St Mary's, Kirkwall again, Finstown, Rendall, Harray, Dounby, Hillside, Kirbuster, Swanney and the Palace, before the day was rounded off with a meal at The Barony Hotel. Only one breakdown took place, the driver being able to do a repair and re-join the convoy a short while later.

In Holm, all the cars took a turn around the steading at Millhouse, the home of Alfie and Allie Eunson. There was an ulterior motive in this. Two of the cars stopped, and the drivers and passengers went in to spring a surprise on the unsuspecting couple. Alfie and Allie were presented with a Life Membership Certificate from Orkney Vintage Club. As chairman, I was honoured to have to carry out this pleasant task. Although the Club has now existed for 20 years, in actual fact there were people in Orkney who had our aims and objectives very much in mind long before then, and Alfie and Allie certainly fall into this category. Along with daughter Evelyn, they have an extensive collection of artefacts, and it is easy to while away several hours at Millhouse.

The next event on the calendar was a Sunday trip to Copinsay. The weather was again kind, and two boat-loads of passengers spent a very enjoyable few hours exploring the island. A full report of this and other club events will duly appear in our next newsletter in February 2004.

A contingent of motoring enthusiasts and friends again took to the roads (and the sea), on the 6th of July, when they journeyed across the Pentland Firth to take part in the Caithness and Sutherland Vintage Vehicle Club's annual Rally.

The Club is now gearing up for its big day - the Annual Rally, which takes place at Orkney Auction Mart on Sunday 10th August. One of the features of the indoor display is to be 'Old Trades', so if anyone has items they would like taken to the Rally, then let me know (771373).

Readers will recall my query regarding the use of the word 'croupier' in the report of the 1882 West Mainland Ploughing Match that was in the last newsletter. Sheila Spence of Linneth in Harray provided the answer almost right away. In an old dictionary of hers, it gives the following definition:

Croupier: One who at a public dinner party sits at the lower end of the table as assistant chairman.

Submitted by Harold Esson



FARMING A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

My grandfather and great-grandfather were both called John Johnston and farmed at Houseby, Beaquoy side. They kept diaries which run from 1873 until 1934, and I thought it might be of interest to readers of *Roond About Birsay* if we looked at what was happening on the farm a hundred years ago. The following is taken from information recorded by my grandfather.

Although there were light snow showers and frost on Hogmanay and New Year's Day, the first snow of any worth was on January 10th and 11th and it was followed by a week or more of calm, frosty weather. Ploughing had commenced on 28th November and was going ahead at every available opportunity, depending on the weather. Other routine tasks filled in the rest of the time - taking in sheaves and turnips, threshing, tying-up straw, bussing and winnowing oats etc. (By the way, the mill at Houseby was water-driven, one of two such mills in the district, the other being at Beaquoy). John fetched 5 bolls, 6 stones of oatmeal from the 'Rangoe Mill' on the 9th January, and put another 10 sacks of oats to the mill on the 17th, this time taking home 2 bolls of bere meal.



On 11th April the weather was recorded as 'Very stormy. Snow Showers. NW, and this lasted for a week. Two significant events took place in April. On the 8th, 'Meg foaled a stag', and three weeks later, 'Fanny foaled a mare'. The sire of both foals was the stallion 'Duke of Abercorn'. Fanny had been lame for some time and was being attended by James Kirkness of Moan. But worse was to follow when her foal died ten days after birth. The horse situation was relieved by using a young mare and getting the loan of a horse from next door neighbour, Tom Paterson of Queer.

The sowing commenced on 1st May. Around this same time, a stot was sold to George Garson of Flanders for £9-15/- (equivalent to £601.97 today). At the Dounby Market, on Thursday 14th May, 3 stots were sold to Mr Whitelaw for £26-10/(equivalent to £1636.13 today). The following Monday he wrote, 'Maggie at

Stromness with cattle for Mr Whitelaw' (Maggie was his wife).

The weather in May was excellent - only one day was recorded as 'damp' and although the 15th was 'very stormy', there was no mention of rain.



The turnips were sown in early June. In those days the drills were opened, then dunged and closed in again, before the turnips were sown. 55 drills of Swedes and 102 drills of yellows were sown. From 22nd June, peat-carting took place and this went on into the first week of July. Four loads a day was most common and the total number came to 46. This included 12 loads that he carted for other people.

No mention is made of when or where the peats were cut, although more than likely they came from *The Mussies*, an area on the south-east corner of Glimps Moss. At that time, people were beginning to cut peats above Overabist, as the new road went in during the early years of the century. (I have plans of the road, if anyone is interested). June's weather was similar to the previous month, with only two mentions of rain, but there was more than a week of cold, northerly weather around the middle of the month.

The main job during the latter half of July was the hay-cutting and turnip-singling. Again, there was little hindrance from the weather; only four days mention rain and three are recorded as 'damp'.

Hay-carting took place in early August and, on the 7th is written, 'Cutting evergreen rye grass seed 27 thrave' (a thrave was 24 sheaves). At the Dounby Market on the 13th, he 'Sold old horse to Mr Matheson, £7, and foal to Mr Goudard £10'. The foal was delivered to Stromness a week later. Other jobs taking place at this time were, 'Scuffling turnips, building rye hay, and delving and carting fail to top the peat-stack'. The grass seed was also threshed, sifted and winnowed, and 16 bushels were stored in the shed loft. On the last day of the month, he fetched a boll of bere meal and $\frac{1}{2}$ a boll of oatmeal from the Rangoe mill. If these extracts prove to be of any interest, I'll take you through the rest of the year in the next newsletter.

Submitted by Harold Esson



WHEN STARS RETURN

Like it or not, soon enough nights will be dark and the stars shine. Look for MARS quite low in the southern sky about midnight. Mars is in opposition again. No he didn't lose an election, the term means that as we view the universe, the Sun is in one direction, and Mars diametrically opposite, so at midnight when the Sun is at its lowest point below the horizon, Mars is at its highest. This occurs 28th of August this year, and reoccurs every 780 days. This year's opposition is special, because the planet is closer than usual - its closest approach in millennia, and therefore brightest and most clearly viewed with a telescope. Unlike the solar eclipse, this close approach lasts for several weeks, and Mars can be seen drifting slowly away through much of the autumn. No telescope? Keep an eye on TV - there are several important space probes that should reach Mars in December or early next year.

Our old friends return - the Plough turning over the heavens in the north, the Great Square of Pegasus to the south, its left edge marking the meridian on which "Spring begins". No harm in planning ahead. We can welcome Orion in October if your party lasts past midnight. Jupiter will be a "morning star" in the southeast this autumn, but bright Venus won't be the "evening star" until December. She'll shine this winter if the earth keeps turning.



Birsay Heritage Trust



IT'S FREE!! There is no admission charge for the Barony Mills this year. It is an experiment to see if the increase in donations from more visitors will balance the loss from ticket fees. So far it seems promising, as visitor numbers are up somewhat from last year. But still we urgently NEED YOUR HELP! Bring your family, friends and guests as often as you

like; buy BERE MEAL and try it in traditional or new recipes. We welcome new recipes and ideas, and we can put them on our website.

Birsay Bere Eaten in London: Bere meal featured as part of an Orkney Quality Food & Drink promotion at the Langham Hilton Hotel in London this March. Menu items included Smoked Orkney Salmon with capers, red onions, horseradish cream and Beremeal Bannocks; Orkney Seafare Oysters with Bere Biscuits and cheddar; and Westray Haddock with Beremeal and mustard crust. Sound good?

Sooans: Rae, the miller, reports that from time to time some sooans are available at the Mill. Sooans is a form of starch prepared by soaking the inner husks of oats for perhaps a week, after a series of draining and replacing the liquid above the starch that has settled to the bottom, flour is added to make a batter for flat scones. These are excellent with cheese or rolled up with jam and have been traditional fare. So if you would like to give it try, stop at the mill and ask when the next sooans will be available and ask Rae for the procedure.

Beyond the Mill: Birsay heritage is more than the Mill, and we need ideas and WORKERS for new projects. Some suggestions that have been made are



1) Capture the Parish, that is take a snapshot of the houses, farms, businesses and people of Birsay today. Not a history in the formal sense but the story of a way of life as it is now. Please contact Melvin Johnston (771-405), Johnnie Johnston (771-276), or the undersigned if you wish to help.

2) A web-page on Birsay's natural heritage. Your Secretary is no help - he doesn't know a sea gull from a sparrow. But Keith Johnson does, and he would like to hear from you (771-328, email: akjohnson@btopenworld.com).

3) New suggestions. Remember BHT is YOUR TRUST to promote the historical and natural heritage of your parish.

VISIT BIRSAY'S WEBSITE: www.birsay.org.uk

Frank Zabriskie



The St Magnus Church Birsay Trust

1627 - 1635

No, none of the trustees was around then, but Rev Francis Liddell was minister of St Magnus during these years. So? Well, Deirdre Hay, a direct descendant of Rev Liddell, visited the church on 7th July and made contact with me. In fact, she has a double connection with the church, because she is also related to Dr Samuel Traill, minister of St Magnus for a lengthy period in the mid-19th century. It's amazing to think we have a direct contact that goes back almost 40 years.

Visitors



Apart from Deirdre Hay, there has been the usual steady stream of visitors, from 16 different countries this year so far. I think it may be the first time we have had visitors from Poland, though I haven't had time to check. Visitors' reactions are always interesting, and some of the comments this year are: "very peaceful"; "a charming find"; "thank you for being open"; "a lovely haven"; "fantastic church"; "beautifully preserved".

Events

Our season began in April with the St Magnus Day Service, featuring pupils from Firth school in a splendid performance in music and mime of 'The Story of St Magnus'. It was first performed at Firth School at Christmas 1999, and then repeated at the Pickaquoy Centre as part of the millennium celebrations. It's a version of the story well worth repeating every two or three years.

The **Jazz Festival service** on the last Sunday of April is by now an eagerly awaited event, with a big attendance from Stromness, Kirkwall and further afield. The band was in particularly good form this year, and was not allowed to leave without an encore.

The **St Magnus Festival concert** in June attracted the usual capacity audience. The Birsay concert has become so popular that it sells out almost as soon as tickets go on sale. Many visitors come to Orkney just for the festival concerts, which leaves little time for sight-seeing, and the concert in Birsay gives them a chance to see a bit of the countryside as well as attending an event in 'the other St Magnus', one of Orkney's most historic buildings, and feasting on the delicious fare provided by some of the many talented local ladies. Once again, we would like to say a very big thank you to them for helping to put Birsay on the map.



These concerts have all sorts of spin-offs, for example, Gemma McGregor, the flautist with the Orkney Ensemble, which gave the Festival concert in St Magnus in 2002 and again in 2003, has composed a short piece about Magnus, and wants its first performance to be in St Magnus, Birsay. Naturally, we are delighted, and it will be part of our St Magnus Day Service in 2004. The singing will be shared among six boys involved in the Orkney Children's Choir.

From Belarus to Birsay.

On Sunday 3rd August at 7.30pm, there will be a gospel concert by Michael Harcus from Westray. At the time of writing he is in Belarus doing a tour on behalf of a charity which he supports. Many of you will have heard Michael on Radio Orkney. Don't miss this opportunity to see him in a live performance.

'More If You Care' Fare



What on earth is that? Well, it may change its name before Sunday 7th September, but it sums up the idea behind the event. We are going to have to do some repairs to the ceiling of St Magnus, though we are not yet sure on how big a scale they will have to be. But even minor repairs will need a major fundraising effort on our part, and it seems appropriate that we should undertake it next year, because it will be exactly 100 years since the last major alterations to the church, which included the installation of the stained-glass window.

To set the fundraising ball rolling, we are planning an event on 7th September, which will be a bit like a car boot sale, and a bit like a collectors' fair, at the Community Centre. We have been given a number of pictures and a good many items of china, glassware, curtains, books, etc., so it seems sensible to start our fundraising now by selling tables of goods of all descriptions at bargain prices - 25p, 50p, £1, £2, £5..., but you can give us more if you care to do so (or care about maintaining St Magnus). There will be items for silent auction, on which you can bid as much as you like, and there will be lots of other things going on as well - traditional music by the Birsay Bairns, some form of fast food served by Dounby/Palace Stores, a treasure map, plant tables etc.

Down at the Palace there will be a small exhibition in the vestry of paintings which have been gifted to us, along with a small display of photographs. Pam and David Ward of Spindrift (formerly Heimdall Tearoom) will serve afternoon teas, sit-in or take-away, and they will be inviting some of their Stromness friends to provide traditional music at the Palace.

Clear out your attic! (just a suggestion!)



As you will see from the July issue of 'The Orkney Advertiser', you can book a sales table for £4., or you can seize the opportunity to clear out your attics and your cupboards of items for which you no longer have any use, but which might be collectable to somebody else, and pass them on to us. If you have big items that

you would like to donate, it would be helpful if you could tell us about them well beforehand. We will be happy to accept small items a day or two before the event, but we would be even happier to accept them at any time throughout the month of August - the sooner the better! You can phone me on 721 241 or bring items to me (or to any of the other trustees).

Help us to make this the **Sale of the Century!**

Bertie Harvey



Birsay Bairns

The Birsay Bairns have been meeting as usual every Wednesday after school during term-time. Thanks must go to Jean Leonard for her time, and all the effort she puts in to the tuition of the bairns. Unfortunately, numbers are dwindling as the older bairns leave the group to follow other pursuits, although they are always willing to come and help us out at any time.

Some of our older members are going to the Isle of Man with the Orkney Traditional Music Project in July. There they will be playing at a local folk festival - representing Scotland!



We held an open-air concert in the Earl's Palace in June. Parents, locals and tourists alike all sat out on a beautiful afternoon, and spent an enjoyable hour listening to a varied selection of tunes.

Some of the tourists were so impressed that they even bought Orkney Traditional Music Project music books and CDs.

We will be meeting again in the Twatt Kirk hall as usual after the holidays.

Susan Norquoy



NEWS from the DOUNBY CENTRE

After a busy Spring Programme the Centre is getting quieter as people move to outdoor activities. However, the Centre is running a busy summer schedule - opening five days a week. This includes a Summer Play Scheme for the kids which hopefully will soon be using the new Playground with all its fancy new equipment - see it building at the back of the school. Some clubs will continue over the summer but do remember if there is some facility not open that you want to use - just ask. The Centre will still be holding car boot sales over the summer and will be playing its part in the Dounby Show - Flowers and Vegetables!



There will be some staff changes during the summer among the stewards [more details later] but the quieter time of year gives us all a breathing space and time to plan for the "back end". Please feel free to ask if you have any problems or if there is any thing that we could be doing better.

P. S. There is now water available in the fitness suite and cooling fans are imminent!

Malcolm I.A.Beaton, Chairman - Dounby Centre Committee

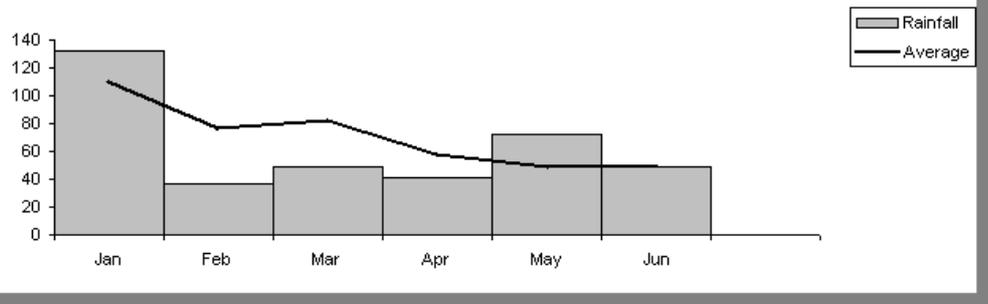


Hundasaeter Weather Station

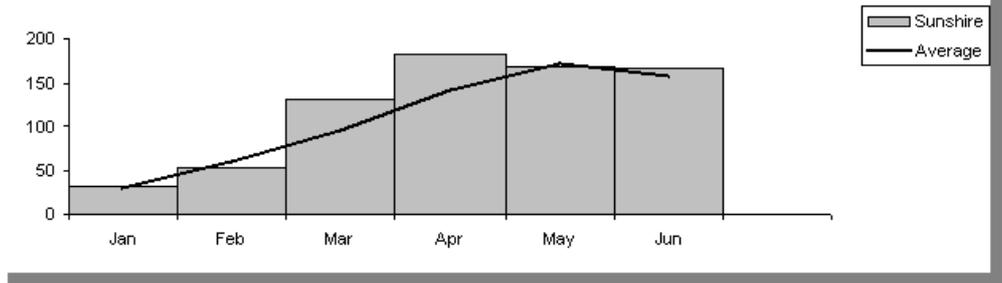
This year has in some respects been a continuation of 2001 and 2002 with a very benign winter (few gales and no real low temperatures) and a sunny, dry spring and only 4 gale days in the first 6 months of the year. The months of January and May were wetter than normal but the other months made up for that with less rain than average. I suspect that the average maximum temperatures are up this year and as I write this, the max. temperature on 17 July was 24.5⁰C - after a quick look at past 50 years at Grimsetter this looks to be the highest temperature recorded; I will confirm in the next news letter. However I do know that higher temperatures have been recorded at Rackwick (please note that the averages quoted do not yet include the years 2000 and 2001 and are for the period 1950-2000 at Grimsetter).

MONTH	Max	Min	mm		
hours		knots			
	TEMP	TEMP	RAIN (AV)	SUN	(AV)
	MAX WIND				
January	10.8	-6.4	132.1 (110.5)	30.8	
(29.3)	64.3				
February	11.0	-3.2	36.3 (76.6)	53.4	
(60.3)	54.8				
March	14.5	-3.8	48.8 (82.4)	131.9	
(94.3)	57.4				
April	21.1	-0.4	40.9 (57.3)	182.1	
(141.7)	42.6				
May	18.8	-0.4	72.6 (49.3)	167.7	
(172.4)	43.5				
June	19.6	5.6	48.9 (48.5)	166.1	
(157.5)	43.5				

Rainfall 2003 (mm)



Sunshine 2003 (hours)



Keith Johnson July 2003

