



James Rae's snuffhorn

Chairman's Letter

Last Summer proved to be quite an exciting time. First at the beginning of June the Otter Bank returned to Orkney to await restoration as the star of the Orkney Boat Museum. Then the friends were Friends involved in the visits of the Danish longboat The Sea Stallion and the Norwegian training ship Straatsrat Lemkuhl.

These enjoyable events paled into insignificance when we received the long awaited news that the Museum project had been awarded a Development Grant of £46,400 by The Heritage Lottery Fund. This has enabled the Board to appoint a Project Development Officer, Alan Clouston who has wide relevant experience. You will read an introduction to him later in this newsletter.

Already we are approaching another A.G.M. All the existing officers have signified their willingness to serve again if elected although George Burgher would prefer to step back from the Vice-Chairmanship, while remaining on the Committee. This brings me to the annual plea for more people to join us on the Committee. As Wanda points out in her article, there is no need to be expert in procedure; there are enough of us who can take care of the formalities. What we long for are people with fresh ideas and the energy and enthusiasm to carry them forward. Please, please do come and join us.

Alan Clouston hopes to join us at the AGM so those of you who do not already know him will get a chance to meet him.

At the start of the meeting the Friends will be handing over a cheque for £14,000 to the Board.

To round off the evening Tom Muir, Exhibitions Officer with Orkney Islands Council will speak to us about the Boat Museum collection and his ideas for planning the displays. This should be very interesting and will, I hope, encourage a few extra people to join us in the Kirkwall Community Centre on April 16th.

Anna Elmy

Banishing the Birds

Soon after Christmas the roof of the Hall of Clestrain underwent some long needed temporary repairs. At the same time mesh screens were fitted to the windows and doorways to keep out the pigeons which regard the building as their home. A few days later I went to take pictures of the repairs, only to be greeted by Jean Craigie with the news that a gale two nights previously had blown a new hole in the roof and a white pigeon was fluttering around inside! As we watched a flock of at least fifty birds circled around,

obviously furious at being barred from their birthplace. Hopefully the builders made further repairs before they all got inside.

Anna Elmy

Arctic Explorers Past and Present

An article from Philippa Ootoowak, a member who lives far from Orkney.

On September 2, 2007 the ship MS *Explorer* dropped anchor off Pond Inlet on the northern tip of Baffin Island in Canada.

This was the seventh “cruise ship” to arrive in the small community of approximately 1,300 people where the majority are Inuit and the language spoken is Inuktitut. This day, however, there was an air of excitement with the arrival of the cruise ship. Today the staff and performers at the Nattinnak Visitor Centre (which also houses the Community Library and Archives) would be invited on board ship by the Adventure Company for lunch, prior to the passengers landing on shore to visit the community and enjoy a cultural performance at the Centre.

Amongst the ships resource staff and passengers were some people well known in the north, including an actor and drum dancer, a singer and cultural specialist, an environmentalist, an ornithologist, an award-winning photographer, an archaeologist, a sea-mammal expert, and someone well known to those of us who have researched the life and times of Dr. John Rae, historical author Ken McGoogan. When I heard that Ken was about to visit, as a long time librarian and recent community archivist, I rushed for the copies of his books in the library (and from my own collection) to have them ready for him to sign. Some years earlier Louie Kamookak, an Inuk guide from Gjoa Haven, had visited the library asking if I had met Ken and he told me of their travels together when researching the book *Fatal Passage: the untold story of John Rae the Arctic Explorer* who discovered the fate of Franklin about the life of John Rae. It was a fascinating story to me since I too had come from Britain as a medical professional, spent time in the Keewatin (now Kivalliq) region of the Arctic, an area well traveled by Rae, and lived in the north for several years, though with much more ease and in far more comfort than John Rae!

My first copy of *Fatal Passage: the untold story of John Rae the Arctic Explorer* had been ordered from a bookstore in Kirkwall, Orkney, after a visit to the islands in 2002. On that visit, looking out from the window of the B & B where I was staying, I noticed a dilapidated, but beautiful, house close to the shore. In my dreams it would have been a house to be purchased, renovated and retired to in old age. It was a house that had an interesting story to tell and asked to be saved from obvious deterioration. After obtaining permission, my sister and I had a wonderful time viewing the building close up, taking many photos and imagining the house in its former glory. It was only then that we learned that this house, named The Hall of Clestrain, was the birthplace of my hero Dr. John Rae, Medical Doctor and Arctic Traveller. How sad that its fate was to fall into ruin and be lost to memory, we thought. Not so, it turned out, as many local people were already working furiously to save this building and other items of



Orkney Heritage. They had ideas and plans to form a Boat Museum along side the “The Hall”.

Since that visit I have been honoured to become a part of this fundraising effort having had such an admiration for John Rae in my own travels. It is also true that I could never have afforded to buy and renovate the house myself (even in my wildest dreams!) as I now lived permanently in the Canadian Arctic, a little too far away to have a retirement home.

So Ken McGoogan stepped off the zodiac boat on to the beach at Pond Inlet, accompanied by about 100 other passengers and crew, and walked up to the Nattinnak Visitor Centre on a sunny but cool September day. He attended the cultural performance of throat singing, Ayaya (traditional Inuit story songs) accompanied by drum dancing all performed by local Inuit, young and old. There was added input to the entertainment from the passengers and staff of the ship that included songs sung together in Inuktitut, Greenlandic and English, and introduced by John MacDonald on the bagpipes (truly!)!



Of course, as is well known, there has been a long connection between Scotland and the Arctic, especially with Orcadians. Passengers on this cruise ship not only learned of the Arctic in terms of the environment, the local culture, the wildlife and modern changes, they learned also about the history of the Arctic and its connections with Scotland. From talking with

authors like Ken McGoogan they could view Arctic exploration of the past from an alternative perspective to that of Sir John Franklin and the British Admiralty. Having now seen the Arctic themselves passenger/adventurers could better understand the idea of survival on the land learned from the people who really knew how to live in the Arctic, the local Inuit.

The MS *Explorer* departed from Pond Inlet waters several hours later after passengers had visited the two local stores, walked along the beach to visit archeological Thule sites, and taken many photographs especially of the dramatic views across Eclipse Sound to the mountains of Bylot Island.

The Nattinnak Centre staff and performers had enjoyed a wonderful meal on board ship as special guests and a guided tour of the vessel. I had my books signed by a renowned author and hopefully all of us gained a greater understanding and respect for the early explorers and adventurers of the Arctic, and the Inuit who helped them survive to tell their stories to the rest of the world.

Philippa Ootoowak, Pond Inlet, Nunavut, Canada.

Project Development Manager

As I mentioned earlier The Board of Orkney Board Museum has appointed Alan Clouston from Orphir as the Development Manager for the Project on a nine-month freelance contract running until October 2008.

Just over a year ago Alan took early retirement from Orkney Islands Council where he was Assistant Director of Education & Recreation Services with specific responsibility for the Community and Recreation sector.

Over the last 35 years he has been involved with many capital building projects supporting community groups throughout Orkney with projects from minor capital grant schemes to larger scale facilities such as the Pickaquoy Project.

Alan sees the Orkney Boat Museum as a major development and a challenge for the Board. He says:

“ Both the Board and the Friends organisation have worked tremendously hard in bringing the vision together and in raising funds towards such a large-scale development. It is now at a crucial stage where a large financial package of grants is needed as building costs inevitably continue to rise.

As development manager, my role is to bring a re-focus on the objectives and outputs of the project; engage with the Board and the Friends in a process of review to determine what is achievable within the funding available from current grant aid sources; create a development timeline on a phased basis; review and prepare for multiple grant applications, designs, supporting documentation and operational budgets all geared towards the operational programme of activity that has to be established for the facility. Everyone needs to be clear about the project; all working together to meet the challenges over the next two to three years.

Projects like these are never straight-forward however I have always believed that ‘where there's a will there's a way’. I look forward to working with everybody - it is your project - keep up the good work, I am here to help you achieve it.”

Alan Clouston

TAKING THE PLUNGE

As you have received this Newsletter, then I assume you are a member of the Friends of the Orkney Boat Museum, but just in case you astutely selected this Newsletter in the dentist's waiting room then I shall explain. The Friends are a group of people whose aim is to support the Board of the Orkney Boat Museum in their endeavours to pursue funds for the creation of a boat museum in Orkney at the Hall Clestrain, and the restoration of the Hall, birth place of John Rae, as a memorial to him and his achievements.

It is a part of the Orkney identity, just as much as the archaeological landscape, the wind and sea blasted cliffs and the fertile fields. In all probability the first settler in Orkney came by boat.

So when I saw a leaflet about the aims of FOBM, I attended their AGM last year, got carried away in the heat of moment and volunteered my name for the committee. When I got home I could not imagine what I could offer to such a serious sounding body. The members were probably all boat-owning masters of nautical knowledge. In truth, I was not even sure what a committee would do.

Well I need not have had such negative thoughts. It is not an onerous task. It is really quite good fun. The members are a friendly and helpful bunch who make one feel welcome and exert no pressure whatever.

We meet in one another's houses roughly once a month and look at ways in which we can raise funds and promote the aims of the Boat Museum. We are a mixed bag of folk and every one of us has something different to offer. Among the varied tasks I volunteered for were asking for donations for raffle prizes; manning the Friends' stand at Show time,

filling envelopes and selling raffle tickets. Doing all these things is fun, especially when in the company of other members.

At meetings there are those who are more understanding than I to cope with the formalities of agenda, minutes and paperwork, so this does not need to worry me. We discuss ideas; circulars sent to us; applications for funds and related information, seminars; designs for cards and other methods of fund raising. I am learning all the time and learning most of all that any amount of input you offer is welcomed and valued. In other words YOU becoming a member of the committee could well be extremely valuable to the Orkney Boat Museum. Extra pairs of hands are always needed. No expertise is necessary, though of course, skills would be most welcome. What I am trying to say, is that if I can help,...anyone can. It does not demand too much of your time. You are not committed for life, give us a year or two and then move on. It is fun and the realisation of our aims will be something to be proud of.

Above all, this is so important to Orkney. Preserving our heritage, our present and our future is vital to our identity. It is not just Orcadians who will profit from this preservation, it will be of benefit to those interested all around the world. We can pride ourselves in having an admirable heritage respectfully presented to all. It is good to be involved.

So come on, take the plunge! I look forward to meeting you at the A.G.M.- and the next committee meeting (just ring any of the contact numbers).

With your help we can raise a cheer together at the opening of the Orkney Boat Museum and the Hall of Clestrain.

Wanda Gorzkowska

COLLISION BETWEEN TWO SAILING PACKETS

George Burgher came across this sorry tale and thought it would be of interest in the Newsletter. It is just the kind of thing we are seeking for our story telling evenings:

In June 1892 James Mainland, Schoolhouse, Westray, was sailing to Kirkwall in his packet boat, LIZZIE (15 tons net, built 1873). On board were boatman Joseph Drever, Moa, and three passengers from Westray (W. Stevenson & Miss Stevenson of Woo and an unrecorded passenger) with a load of hay, eggs and fish. That same morning between nine and ten o'clock the wooden packet CATHERINE (12 tons net, built 1866) also left Westray skippered by her owner, Captain James Corse. She had seven passengers - A Thomson, solicitor, Kirkwall; Robert Laing, cattle-dealer, Aberdeen; Wm Hourston, merchant of 'Marwick & Hourston', Kirkwall; John Thomson, farmer, Westray; David Reid, Westray; Mary Ann Reid (25), Millhouse, Westside, Westray; and Janet Paterson (71), Powdykes, Westray. Mary Ann Reid was on her way to America. There was also a boatman, Wm Corse, 8 cattle, 2 ponies and 1 sheep on board. At about two o'clock both boats were stuggling against a force 7 SW gale opposite Carness and "both under great way". According to the 'Orkney Herald' the Lizzie was on the port tack and the Catherine on the starboard tack. The Lizzie hoped to weather the Catherine but did not and cut her down about the lee quarter. 'The Orcadian' states that the

Lizzie was on the starboard tack! Whatever the true facts the Catherine sank in less than three minutes.

Seventy one year old Janet Paterson on the Lizzie was saved by Joseph Drever at great risk to his own life. All were taken aboard the Lizzie which had to be beached on Thieves Holm before it also sank. The crew and passengers of the Catherine lost everything including the livestock on board. The trunk belonging to Mary Ann Reid, the young woman going to America, was later washed ashore on Thieves Holm.

The accident had been seen from Kirkwall pier and S S Lizzie Burroughs went to Thieves Holm to take off all the passengers. This must have been a very traumatic experience for all the passengers but especially for Miss Patterson, who nearly drowned, and the young lady going to America.



The Friends will once again be present at the Dounby Show and the County Show. At both these events Iris Heddle's beautiful sail will be heralding our presence.

That almost concludes this bumper edition of the Friends Newsletter.

It only remains to remind you to buy and sell all your Prize Draw tickets in good time. If you need further supplies Jack Drever will be only too pleased to oblige you!

As usual we have been given a large number of highly desirable prizes. If you don't buy you can't win!

The Lord Lieutenant of Orkney, Dr. Tony Trickett has kindly consented to make the draw at the County Show.



Friends of Orkney Boat Museum is a recognised Scottish Charity No: SC036660
Address: Jack Drever, FOBM Secretary, Warbister, Dounby, Orkney, KW17 2JB
Tel: 01856 771889, E-mail: jdreverboat@aol.com
Websites: www.orkneyboatmuseum.org.uk
www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/fobm