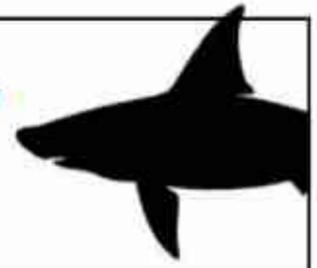


# The *News for and by the people of Birsay* ROOND ABOUT BIRSAY



## LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS



© JP Orkney

At time of publication, the UK is beginning to emerge from lockdown restrictions that brought community life in Birsay to a standstill since March. Visitors are arriving to our shores and a sense of normality can be found again on our streets and for local businesses. Precautions of face masks and social distancing remain with the COVID-19 virus that has affected all nations and communities very much a continuous threat to our well-being and way of life. But hope

is on the horizon with schools set for a return this month and the drive for a vaccine at top speed. Shielding measures have now been eased and freedom to visit more households present. But the virus has postponed the bi-annual pantomime and the ability to make plans in certainty. Hopes are set on 2021 and we continue to preserve the safety of our shores in the months to come.

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**EDITORIAL**  
Kenny

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of Roond About Birsay, full of interesting articles and news from the various groups in the parish. This is our first digital newsletter to be issued online, we made this decision to be environmentally friendly, but it will save us the work off delivery which would have been more difficult during the current pandemic. It seems strange to see Birsay, Dounby, The Barony Mill, the Palace the campsite and the carparks at Marwick, the Point of Buckquoy etc so quiet at this time of year, and no events to look forward to, the events that we gauge the progress of the year by, the Folk Festival, St Magnus Marathon, Shopping Week, the Shows! This must also be having a huge impact on many of our local businesses, clubs and charities and folk in general with many people furloughed still. Hopefully as the cases get less the lockdown will be able to be eased gradually and we will all manage to keep safe and return to normal. We hope you enjoy reading Roond



**ADMINISTRATOR**  
Jack Norquoy

Much like the world adapts to the so-called 'new normal', readers of the Roond About Birsay can now log onto [birsay.org.uk](http://birsay.org.uk) to access this latest edition to help do our bit for the environment. It will be an unenviable task to write the chapter on 2020 in future history books. Precisely an unenviable task by its enormity. But what is now important will be how the chapters thereafter are shaped. Strolling the quiet beaches of Birsay I cannot help but reflect on the turmoil of horizons afar and near. Comfort has been so treasured during lockdown in the tranquillity of our shores. But the significance of the times will leave no stone unturned. Grains of normality are beginning to return with the re-opening of many local businesses and arrival of visitors. Some changes do look likely to be here for longer than the visitors with the use of face masks a new norm. While we mourn the horrific impact this pandemic has had, I hope the rediscovery of some values and changes to unsustainable behaviour will last long after we beat this virus.

**GOT A SUBMISSION? [birsayroondabout@gmail.com](mailto:birsayroondabout@gmail.com)**

## PRIME MINISTER VISITS LOCAL BIRSAY FISHERMAN DURING VISIT TO ORKNEY

A local Birsay crab fisherman received a Prime Ministerial seal of approval during a recent trip to Orkney. Ronnie Norquoy of Celtic Dawn Fishing welcomed aboard Boris Johnson on his new 2019 built crabber, Carvela in Stromness. The Prime Minister visited the isles as part of the £100m Islands Growth Deal launch — a joint UK and Scottish Government deal to give the Northern Isles a cash boost. The Prime Minister, greeted by gatherings of protestors and supporters while in Orkney, also visited the Orkney Cheese Factory and held a roundtable with local Council and business representatives in Kirkwall. As pictured, the Prime Minister is seen handling brown crab and watching over the landing of crab on Coplands Dock.





## Birsay Community Association

By Only Tullock, Chairperson



Well, strange times we are living in, I've often wished that life would slow down a bit, so that I could draw breath and catch up with all the things that need to be done at home, but never did I think we would be in the situation we are in now. All local events cancelled or postponed and nothing happening in our local community centres.

In Birsay we got the year off to a good start with 2 very successful ploughing match dances and a very popular Curry & Quiz Night (plus mince & tatties of course!) It was such a success that we had to put up quite a few extra tables. Little did we know then that things were about to change so much! We had planned a Sunday afternoon Bingo on 19<sup>th</sup> April and we also had a big fundraising day planned in July, which would have provided valuable income for our hall.

The Drama Group had to cancel a repeat of the Drama Festival plays, which was unable to go ahead at the end of March. We also were to have hosted a Folk Festival Ceilidh at the end of May and of course the very popular St Magnus Marathon, so we'll just have to wait to see what next year brings.

So many folk are missing the various group gatherings at the hall, such as SWI, Mum's & Toddlers, Lunch Club, Whist & 500 and Kids Group. I would just like to say at this point, that the last 2 months of our 350 Club Draw will be drawn once we can get together as a group and we are already planning to get the next one underway for later in the year. Like all Council owned playparks, we had our closed during lockdown but from July 3<sup>rd</sup> it is now open again to the public for use anytime.

Our hall has also proved a popular venue, with folk from all over, choosing to have their birthday party's and weddings there, so are there a lot of disappointed folk, who have had to cancel or postpone plans and decide whether or not to book at some future date.

Like every other local community association we will struggle this year to cover our costs, but I am sure with the hard work of our committee, getting additional help from Friends of BCA and all the locals and folk from further afield who support our events, we will get through this and look forward to a very busy year next year! But I will be very careful what I wish for in the future!

### POST OFFICE SERVICE RESUMES IN BIRSAY VILLAGE FROM KIRK—

- **Orkney ranks third place in UK for lockdown delivery hotspots**



Following the closure of Palace Stores at the end of 2019, a new weekly Post Office service has operated from St Magnus Kirk. The service on Thursdays 2-4pm is operated by the Finstown Post Office. Changes have been made to ensure safe social distancing and hygiene with screens and available hand sanitiser from the Deerness Distillery. Copies of *The Orcadian* are available via self-service. Postmaster Mark Kirkbride has said "it is great that customers have

continued to support the Birsay Post Office during this time." The full range of services including banking post and bill payments are provided. Recent news is that cheques can now be paid into customers own bank accounts without the need for a paying in slip, just write your bank details (account number and sort code) on the back of the cheque. Royal Mail has announced Orkney was third in the UK for deliveries with Shetland taking first and central London second place during the coronavirus lockdown.

### NEW HONESTY BOX IN BIRSAY VILLAGE

A new honesty box with home baking and produce is open in the Birsay Village by Jane and Paul Hudd of Cleatfurrows. Orders of JP Orkney produce can also be made online via their Facebook page and website [www.jporkney.co.uk](http://www.jporkney.co.uk)



 /jporkney

# The lost story of the motorcar named *Birsay*

By Tommy Matches



BS 3918 'Birsay' built by Fred McArdell pictured above.

During last year I had an email from a lady with an enquiry about her uncle who had served at the Twatt aerodrome during WW2. Not unusual as we get quite a few descendants trying to find information about their serving relatives. However this particular serviceman was different as he had built a motor car for himself and named it a 'Birsay'. It is thought he was a draughtsman at HMS Tern and made the car from various bits and pieces which he acquired despite the difficult times in the aftermath of war. His name was Fredrick MacArdell and he stayed on in the parish after the war ended, building a house on the Hundland road which he named More Cottage.

He lived there with his partner Margery until mid to late 1952 when he left Orkney and moved to live near Leeds in England. As the picture shows, the car was fairly basic with a 350cc motor cycle engine and built at a cost of three pounds fifteen shillings. (£3.75) It cruised at 50mp with fuel consumption of 65mpg, a single seater; the steering wheel had to be removed to get in and out of the driving seat. The 'Birsay' car was registered BS 3918 in 1951 but it may have been in use unofficially during its development before that date! After leaving Orkney he took up employment working for the Ministry of Defence where he met

up with another engineer, Ian Watson and together they built several cars. If the caption on the newspaper cutting is to be believed Fred drove the car down to Leeds, not an easy undertaking in a home built open single seat car. Following the war many 'formula' car racing clubs were formed in the UK which enabled Fred and Ian to race their cars still using the 'Birsay' designation with some notable success at Brands Hatch, Oulton and other tracks

achieving first and second places at times. How many cars in total they built is not known but it is thought at least one still exists, a 1955 model powered by a Triumph engine, which was sold at Bonhams, an auction house, in 2015. What the selling price was I have yet to discover. No other Orkney parish as far as I know has given its name to a car marque so if anyone remembers Fred and/or his car the Tern sub group of Birsay Heritage would be keen to hear from you.



## SECOND BEST AWARDED TO BIRSAY LIMOUSIN HEIFER AT OVERWINTERING COMPETITION —

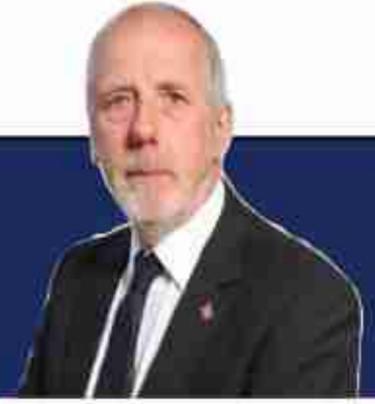
The Orkney Young Farmers annual overwintering competition went ahead at the Orkney Auction Mart under the strict coronavirus measures on April 12. In line with the current guidance from the government, the competition – which would normally be a well-attended affair – was held behind closed doors, with not a spectator in sight. This year the competition was judged by Shapinsay's Stuart Leslie, who chose a March 2018-born Limousin cross heifer shown by St

Ola's Inga Kemp as his overall champion. The heifer was bred by G. & S. Sinclair, Beboran, Harray. Connor Spence, from Hayon, Birsay, had the second best beast – a Limousin cross heifer, born in November 2017, and bred by J. & J. Smith, Upper Cornquoy, Holm. Connor also picked up prizes for the best home-bred animal. The champion there was an animal shown by Connor Spence – this time a British Blue cross steer born in November 2018.



## Cooncillor Chat

Convener, Cllr Harvey Johnston



Sitting here looking over the West Mainland in these last days of May, when that greenness that so defines Orkney is at its very greenest, in week 10 of lockdown, I have never been more thankful of our islands' geographical location and the sparsely distributed nature of our habitations. Our lives have been dramatically changed by the Covid-19 crisis. As Convener I have seen all the civic occasions that take up much of my time vanish off the face of the earth, hopefully temporarily. Orkney Council business however continues albeit in a different manner. Thanks to the amazing technological capabilities of Microsoft Teams and a reasonable broadband connection, I have been able to chair two full formal decision making meetings of Orkney islands Council and take

part in many others from my own sitting room. The fact that this can be done and that many people have discovered that they are able to work efficiently from home will mean that we must look seriously at our work practises in the future. Many efficiencies and cost savings may be possible, which may also facilitate changes in childcare requirements. Constituents may be pleased to note that my expenses over the last two months have been zero. On the domestic front also our lives have changed beyond all comparison. Thanks mainly to

Helen's gift of hospitality, our house has always acted like a hub for our large immediate and extended families and it was not unusual to have into the teens of unannounced visitors for lunch or tea plus numerous other drop ins besides. Now for the last 10 weeks there has only been two of us and it does seem somewhat pathetic when taking a frozen sliced loaf out of the freezer to be able to calculate precisely how many days these slices are going to last and put so many back into the freeze. We have been most fortunate in Orkney to have

**"I have never been so thankful of our islands' geographical location ... our lives have changed dramatically"**

escaped so far, the physical ravages of this pandemic, and even the much greater economic impact has been very unfairly distributed across the population. With a demographically aged population with a high proportion are on pensions which to date have thankfully continued as normal. We also have a high proportion of public sector employment so income in most instances has continued. Agricultural activities have carried on to date without any major financial implications. However, those in the

hospitality, retail, catering, accommodation, tourism, manufacturing and fishing industries (among others) have seen their entire customer base and income disappear before their very eyes. As restrictions ease those of us fortunate enough to have been unaffected economically have a duty to try and circulate as much money back into the local economy as possible. (Some may even have built up a small surplus due to lack of opportunity to spend.) **Orkney really needs that money to stay here**, to help us keep jobs and to kick start the economy. I close by quoting an excerpt from a few words I wrote some years ago, actually referring to Fair Trade goods, but the sentiment certainly still applies to all local goods and services...

**Buy local food wi' low food miles  
Buy local, and support the Isles  
Buy local and each pound you spend Steys here gaan roond for weeks on end It's Orkney value slowly fades Sustaining services and trades. By contrast, buy from Amazon. Wan click, that pound has vanished. Gone (Other online retailers are available)**



Each edition of *Roond About Birsay* we hear from one of the four representatives in the Orkney Islands Council for the West Mainland ward. For more information and contact details, please visit [www.orkney.gov.uk](http://www.orkney.gov.uk)

# FARMERS Gathering

By Marty Hay



We start the New Year with Keith Eunson from Braebuster Farm in Deerness doing the January meeting. We had one of our best turnouts ever for this meeting, with about 45 people attending. Keith gave a very interesting talk on how he has built up his farming enterprise over the last 20 or so years. He gave a very relaxed and informative presentation. His slide show of the steading, stock and machinery showed the attention to detail and everything done there, on what is one of the biggest farms on the Orkney Mainland, is as good if not better than many a small holding. There was good audience participation during the talk, which Keith could easily deal with as he had all the facts and figures in his head, like acres cropped, barley varieties, pedigree bulls bought and sold, and his herds' lineage. All and all a grand night out. The February meeting was held on a Monday night as our guest was Graham Brown from Reidhall Farms, Stracathro, near Laurencekirk, and he was up that day for the special sale at the mart. As you can guess he is a cattle dealer, and also farms a lot of arable crops, including daffodils. Graham is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation farmer as his father was a grain merchant first before becoming a farmer. He spoke about the cattle to begin with, and how he likes Orkney bred cattle, quite fussy about what he buys, mostly Limousin cross being preferred. He knows the cattle that does well with him and the farms they come from, and he comes back every year looking for more. He has a cattleman looking after the stock, but the same as Keith, the attention to detail and how they settle in after arrival and their diet was key to success and profit. On the arable side he grows mostly cereals for feeding the stock, and the straw for bedding. He also grows some for

malting. As mentioned previously he also grows daffodil bulbs where his passion seems to lie. He grows bulbs for a larger growing group in Angus, they are grown here in Scotland as they are so free of disease due to our colder climate. They are harvested, not unlike tatties, sold mostly to America and Holland for seed where they go on to grow flowers for sale. I never realised there were hundreds of varieties of daffodil, Graham only grows a few varieties, but during his slide show which he ended his entertaining talk with, we saw all different colours and shapes. It was grand to hear about a completely different crop from what we are all used to. The last meeting of the season in March was Richard Herdman from Linday in Sandwick. We were back to a Friday night, but it was in the middle of the Young Farmers Concert competition, so it, amongst other things, affected our turnout, but there were still about 30 folk. Richard start with the history of his farm, and how his Mother with her Our parents moved from Holm after the war and start the dairy farm that continues to this day, all be it a much bigger concern now, as they have bought more land and rented a neighbouring farm. He start his slide show with a picture of a dairy coo and a highland coo standing in a field wae a few dockans, he said that it summed up his farming enterprise but true to character he plays it doon, like the previous speakers it's the attention to detail. The management of diet and herd health on a modern dairy farm produces top quality milk for

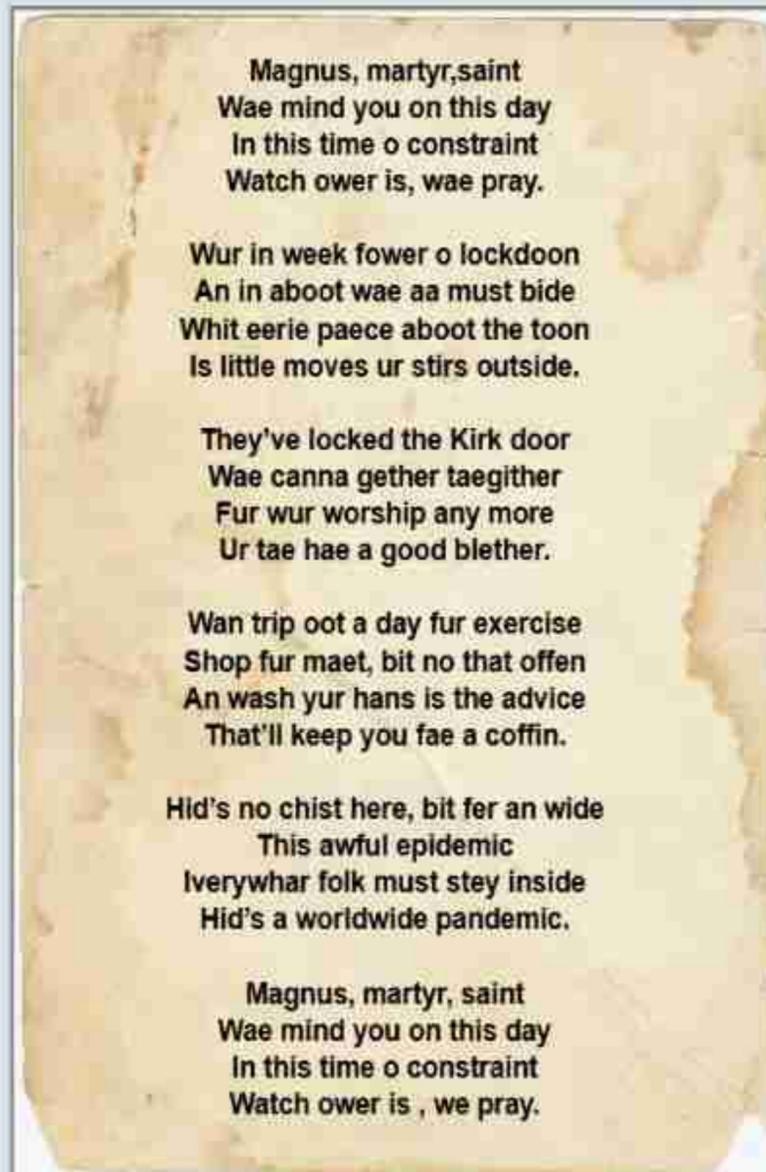
cheese making. He spoke about the need to control graze some meadow land on the rented farm led to a small hobby herd of highland coos, quite a difference in management requirements. Richard is also Chairman of Orkney Cheese, and there were slides of the cheese factory showing the butter and cheese making process, which he spoke about in detail. Richard finished off with an impromptu raffle including Orkney Cheese and Butter, Lizzos farmhouse cheese and even some highland beef. Another fine night and the end of another great season of gatherings. Hopefully our gatherings will be able to start up again in October, hope to see you all then. I would like to finish by thanking Ruth Rosie for providing the lovely suppers we get at the meetings, and the ladies that help serve it up, we are truly spoilt.



Well this is certainly a different issue of Kirk News with the continuing current restrictions of COVID 19 in place. Since the turn of the year no events have been held in St Magnus Church, Birsay. The annual St Magnus Day service, to be held on 16 April, was one of the many events cancelled across the county. Robin Barr one of the trustees along with Linda Broadley, our locum minister for Birsay, Harray and Sandwick, organised a programme of words and music which trace the journeys of Magnus as a young Viking warrior down the West Coast of Britain from Orkney to Wales. An invitation was sent to other congregations to send a couple of representatives to celebrate this special day in the very place where St Magnus was brought up in the faith. Unfortunately the event could not take place but the story of St Magnus was highlighted via Radio Orkney and The Orcadian, a big thank you to the media. Hopefully normal service will be resumed by next St Magnus Day. I am sure many people from Orkney and further afield will have remembered St Magnus in their own special way. There are several writing groups across Orkney and under lockdown still meet through email and other virtual apps. One of these groups is Orkney Voices run by Alison Miller fae Orphir. I asked Alison tae email me twa-three sentences about the group.

This wis the reply; "Orkney Voices Writing Group started life as pert o Scottish PEN's Scotland-wide project 'Many Voices' which ran from August – November 2017. When the project wis ower, members o the group all said they wid like tae kerry hid on, so Orkney Voices wis born. The group is for Orcadian spaekers – tae encourage them tae use

celebrate the Orkney tongue in a variety o weys, whether in poetry, prose or drama, fiction or non-fiction. Weel when I cam home tae Orkney fae sooth a few year ago, hid struck me time an time again hoo few Orcadian speakers gaed tae Writing or Reading groups already set up. I didna think hid could be that Orcadians hid nothen tae say. But I could see thir wis some kind o reticence haadan them back fae joinan in among fokk that seemed tae hiv more confidence in the wey they spokk. So that wis the reason for the setteen up Orkney Voices. The Orkney language o wir feythers an mithers, o wir grandparents, is gradually disappearan. This group is tryan tae use an preserve whit we can o hid in creative weys." As a member o this group we meet wans a fortnight, ithers cuman fae Kirkwall, Orphir, Birsay, Harray, Tankerness and Shapinsay. During social distancing St Magnus featured in wir thowts in April. I wid like to include a dialect poem fae the pen o Sheila Garson fae Shapinsay, about St Magnus Day this year. Finally the trust acknowledges Birsay brides and grooms to be and their families who have had to cancel wedding dates, both in St Magnus Church and elsewhere, and we wish you all well for future arrangements.

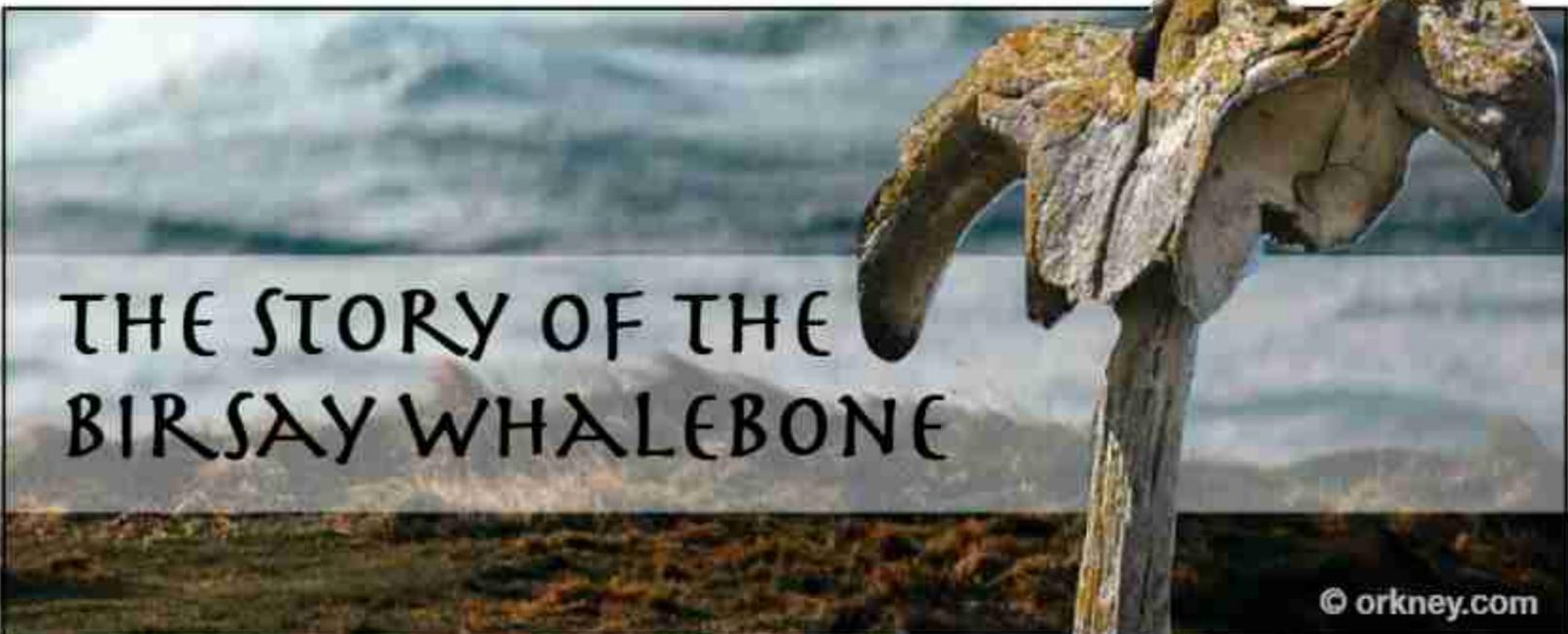


Orcadian in creative written an no tae be ashamed or embarrassed about hid, bit tae grow in confidence an

## KIRK NEWS

By Greer Norquoy





## THE STORY OF THE BIRSAY WHALEBONE

© orkney.com

Positioned near the cliff edge, its silhouette stands poised like a giant fossilised bird frozen mid-flight. The origins of the whalebone structure have been partly lost in time, with what little is known having been passed down by word of mouth through generations. The remains of the whale were thought to have been washed up around 1876 on the beach below.

An expert has identified the partial jawbone and the back of the skull as belonging to a right whale which are baleen-feeding whales. Right whales were named by whalers because they were considered the 'right' whale to hunt. These days, many people regard washed up or beached whales as a tragic event. However, for millennia in Orkney, like many coastal communities, they were viewed as a bounty. Every part of a whale had a valuable use, mainly for food, fuel or making practical and decorative items. Archaeological excavations have revealed that from Neolithic to Norse times, whale parts have been utilised by the various inhabitants of Orkney. The whale at Birsay washed up at a time when whaling had been transformed into a commercial

activity and whale products such as oil were a valuable commodity. This period forged a new chapter in Orkney's maritime history and between the 18th and 19th century, whaling ships would stop at Stromness to recruit Orcadians

*“ Not far from where the vast Atlantic Ocean meets the stormy North Sea, the Birsay Whalebone looks out across the wave-filled horizon. ”*

before heading out to the Arctic. Hundreds of local men were taken on as crew each year and at times over 30 whaling ships would be berthed in Stromness harbour. As the whale population started to reduce, the ships would have to enter increasingly dangerous waters, making whaling a risky occupation. In Kirkwall a whaling station was set up in Shore Street to process blubber from the Davis Straits in the Arctic. To try and capitalise on this profitable trade, the local men of North side decided they would buy the Birsay whale carcass from the Receiver of Wreck and process it themselves for a bigger profit. Although they did salvage the meat, bone and oil, they were unable to turn the whale over to access all the

It is said that although they didn't lose money, the overall endeavour was seen as a disappointment. After that, it is presumed the whale carcass was left to decompose on the beach for

several more years before the bones could be easily accessed and the present sculpture was erected. It has been calculated that it was positioned on

the coastline near to where the whale was washed up some time after 1880. The purpose of the structure has also been lost in time but theories include it being used as a fishing landmark to help navigate safe passage or that it was placed there as a mark of respect for the whale. Some of the other bones retrieved were used to make a milking stool, a kitchen seat and for decorative purposes. Whatever the reason it was built, the whalebone remains as a physical reminder of the magnificent whales that frequently pass through the surrounding waters and their long and changing relationship with Orcadians.

## MAJOR VIKING DNA STUDY BY UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH—



## TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS EASE AS ORKNEY WELCOMES VISITORS BACK TO THE ISLES



A major study led by the University of Edinburgh is investigating the unique gene pool of the Northern Isles. The population of Orkney today is thought to largely descend from some 1,000 to 2,000 founders when the Vikings arrived between 1100 to 1200 years ago. More than 1,000 Orcadians and Shetlanders from around the world signed up to take part in a Viking DNA study within three days of it being announced. It is hoped that 4,000 people will take part in a study which uses the unique gene pool in the Northern Isles - where the ancestry is roughly 25 per cent Norse - to understand conditions such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, cancer and multiple sclerosis. The study being lead by Prof Wilson, who is originally from Orkney, said research had show that, in some cases, genetic variants could be 150 more times more common on the islands than anywhere else. He said early results from tests involving an initial group of 4,000 islanders suggested that some exceedingly rare diseases and illnesses were potentially more commonly found in Orkney and Shetland when compared to the rest of the world, but added that results were yet to be finalised. The study also involves the University of Aberdeen and NHS Grampian clinical genetics doctors Professor Zosia Miedzybrodzka and Dr John Dean, who have been holding clinics in Shetland and Orkney for over 20 years. Professor Miedzybrodzka said: "Better understanding the genetics of the Northern Isles will lead to better health care in the long run, both directly to the islanders but also worldwide". People who would like to take part can register their interest by visiting the study website: [www.ed.ac.uk/viking](http://www.ed.ac.uk/viking).

# BARONY MILL

## ONLINE BEREMEAL ORDERS SOAR AMIDST CLOSED VISITOR SEASON

With home-baking on the rise during lockdown a national shortage of commercial white flours saw a surge in demand for some of the UK's small flour producers, including Birsay's own Barony Mill. Online sales of Beremeal via the new website increased dramatically during period of lockdown with hundreds of orders. Packages prepared by Ali Harcus, miller, have been sent the length and breadth of the UK with increasing interest now from overseas.

## DOORS TO REMAIN CLOSED FOR PUBLIC AMIDST COVID CONCERNS



Due to strict social distancing and virus spread prevention measures, the Birsay Heritage Trust took the decision to keep the Barony Mill closed to the public and will remain closed for the remainder of the summer season. This is the first time the Mill has been closed to the public over the summer in the time it has been operated by the Trust. Fulfilment of orders continue and the Mill remains very much open for business of Beremeal. The Trust hope to welcome visitors again in May 2021.



## TV APPEARANCE ON MYSTIC BRITAIN

The Barony Mill featured on national TV screens again on 16 June. Part of the Smithsonian Channel's Mystic Britain series, the Mill featured on 'Monster of Maeshowe' as part of a wider visit to Orkney. This marks the third major TV appearance of the Mill in recent years with James Martin's Great British Adventure on ITV continuing to make regular worldwide appearances. To check future airings of the series, visit [smithsonianchannel.com](http://smithsonianchannel.com)



## SHOP LOCAL BUY LOCAL | ORDER BEREMEAL ONLINE TODAY

### DISCOUNTED PRICES FOR KEEN BERE BAKERS

Barony Mill is now offering discounted prices for our regular, keen bakers in need of larger quantities at reduced prices. Orders can be made online at [baronymill.com](http://baronymill.com)

4x 1.5kg = £16

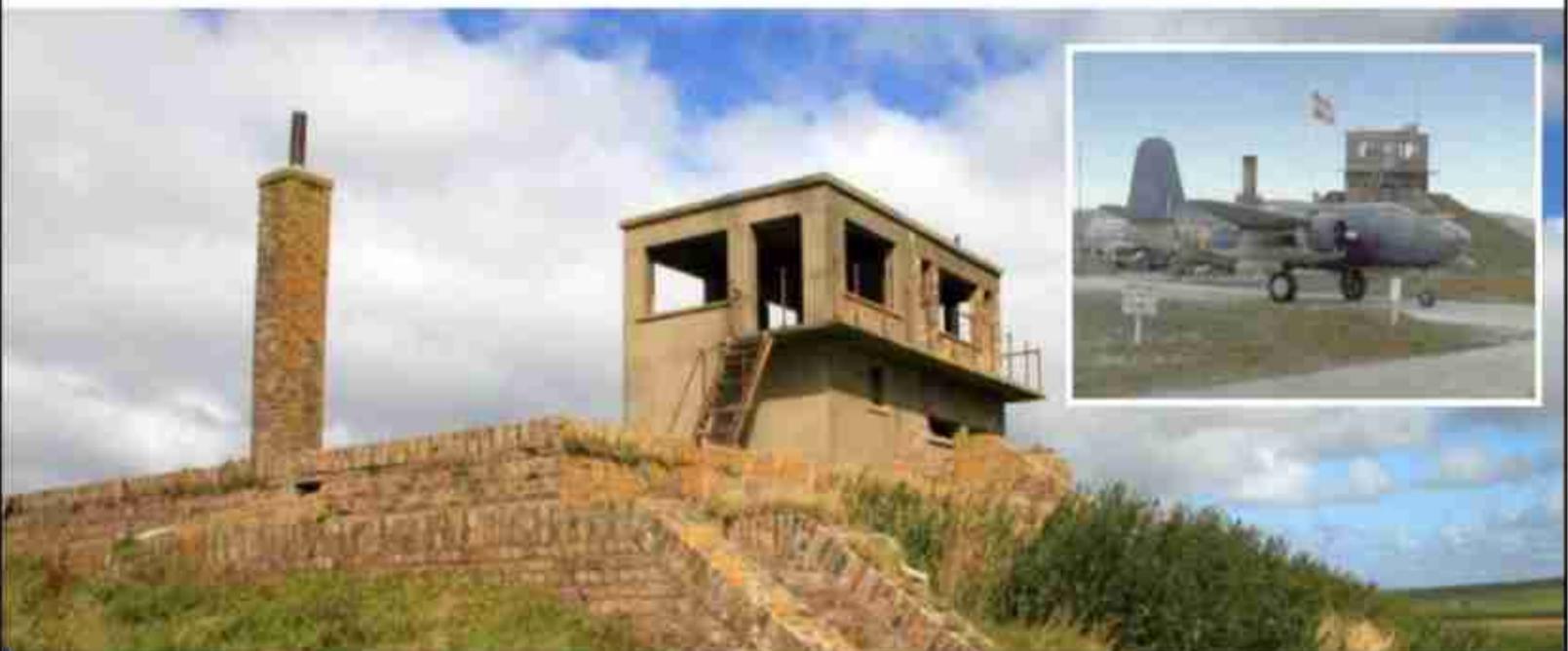
5x 1.5kg = £20

6x1.5kg = £24

# HOME OF BEREMEAL SINCE 1873

## THE SKIES THE LIMIT! FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLANS BY BHT FOR HMS TERN ON THE UPWARDS

Since the early 1980's when the community council intervened in the demolition of HMS Tern, it has been along held ambition to restore the airfield. This is a major project and one for the Trust has over the years encountered many set backs, however the Trust finally have secured some funding to allow us to progress. In the back end of 2019 BHT secured a consultant to help with some initial funding applications these have been successful. They have allowed for the appointment of a development team to complete the business plan and that work is under way. A project officer for two years, Jane Robertson, has also been appointed who will assist us to complete all the other funding applications.



## BIRSAY BAY TEAROOM SET FOR AUGUST RE-OPENING

Birsay Village's award winning Birsay Bay Tearoom is set for a re-opening to the public on Friday 7 August. The Tearoom has adopted many of the recommendations of the government and ready to open again safely. Changes will include the operation an online table booking service. Customers are encouraging to check the Tearoom's Facebook page and website for all the latest news and how to book once re-opened. During the lockdown period, the Tearoom while closed for customers remained very much open for business by supplying the Stromness Deli and Shearer's in Kirkwall with fresh sweet and savoury bakes and also ran an online click and collect service.



/BirsayBayTearoom

## BIRSAY DRAMA GROUP SDCA SUCCESS

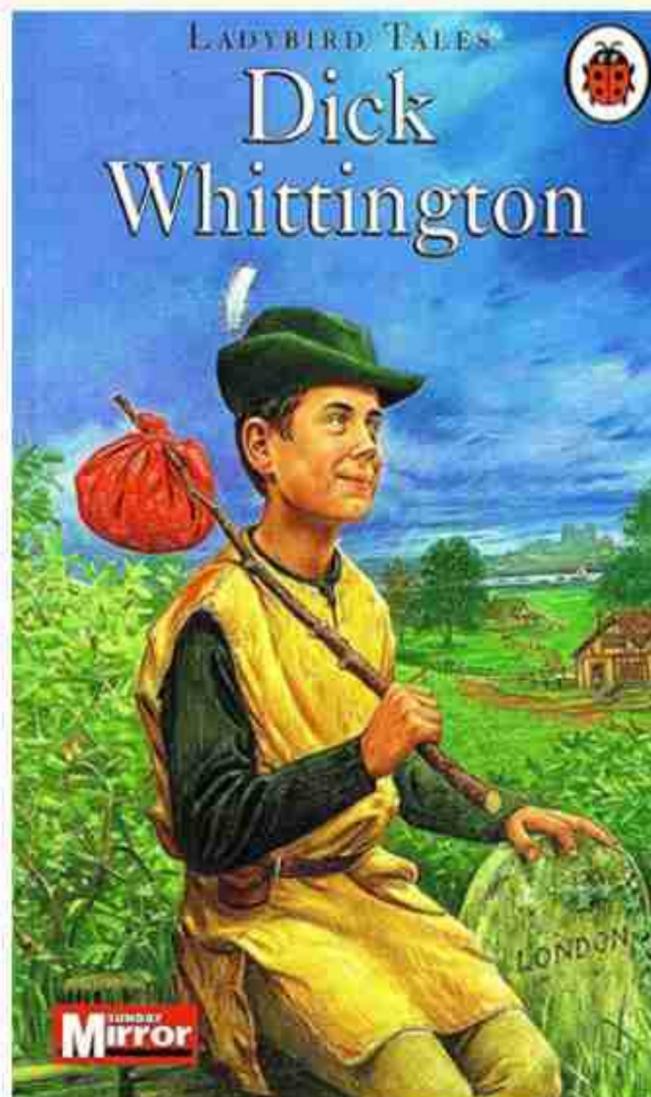


### FIRST PLACE OVERALL FOR BIRSAY DRAMA'S 'THE SISTERS OF CASTLEKNOCK HOUSE'

The Birsay Drama Club has had a very successful start to the year winning three trophies at the Scottish Community Drama Festival District competition in the Orkney Theatre in February. The team comprising Kylie Harcus, Karen Hay and Lynne Nicolson performed "The Sisters of Castleknock House" and won first place overall, the parish trophy and the cup for best direction. Unfortunately the following rounds at divisional were cancelled due to the current pandemic. The other adult entry was a hilarious farce set in an American hospital, the team were praised for their excellent comedic timing, acting, and well crafted comedy moments. The club also entered a youth play with 16 young people taking to the stage. They were praised for their handling of a very difficult script, great costumes and good acting. They also performed the play for pupils at Dounby School for the public.

### 2020 BIRSAY PANTOMIME POSTPONED BY COVID19

The next venture for the club is usually the biennial panto, which is normally performed in December, but this years production of Dick Whittington has been postpone due to the ongoing uncertainty by Covid-19. The script, ready adapted to give a more local audience appeal, is hoped to be performed even in 2021. The Birsay Drama Group are always open to new local members, whether it be to perform or help behind the scenes. To get involved please search for the Birsay Drama Group Facebook page and ask to join. Or contact Issy on [issy.grieve@btinternet.com](mailto:issy.grieve@btinternet.com)





## BIRSAY, HARRAY AND SANDWICK'S NEW LOCUM MINISTER *Linda Bradley*

My name is Linda Bradley and I am a retired - well not really - Kirk minister. Ever since I left my full time parish over six years ago, I have been fortunate to be able to fill in as Locum in lots of parishes around Scotland and beyond in Europe. I came here to Harray, Birsay and Sandwick parish, where we meet in the Milestone Kirk in Dounby, at the end of November, so I had time to meet many of the folk and find my way around this amazing island before we had to 'lock down' in March. I did have time to get out to a number of the inner islands too, but not any of the far away ones.

I had never been to Orkney before but had heard much about island life, from friends who used to livened teach in Stromness. However I have already spent time working on Skye and Colonsay and since I love the sea it's good to live in walking or cycling distance of lovely beaches and cliffs. My favourite beach without question in Orkney is Birsay and when the tide is right, a quick walk round the brough is just SO invigorating and Birsay is where I found my one and only grottie buckie - so far! We had also planned a very special service from St Magnus kirk in Birsay for his annual anniversary, but that had to be cancelled, so until next year...

Before lock down, we had lots of gatherings in the Milestone other than Sundays, because we very much want the building to be a community meeting place, and it will be again. In the past three months there has been a superb 'coming together' of the community and we hope that no-one is without the help and company that they need.

The folks in the parish very kindly decorated and furnished the manse in Dounby for me, and again over the winter, lots of family and friends came to visit and all of them fell in love with your island.

Like many I am out and about walking every day and the bird life here is amazing. I haven't seen flocks of curlews for years, and there are many more oyster catchers than on mainland Scotland. Wrens are everywhere and in early morning the thrushes and blackbirds in the garden are so musical. The other day I was waxing lyrical about having seen seven, yes seven, pairs of geese leading their chicks over the road at the end of a day's grazing in a field of young grass. My neighbour said 'you can tell you are not from Orkney because the locals know that there are too many geese in Orkney doing too much damage in the fields!' I'm slowly learning when to holiday my tongue. Another area when I have to keep quiet is the fact that I am a vegetarian and I know that Orkney is an island of prime beef farming, so I just normally keep quiet about my dietary habits!

Keeping in touch with everyone at this time is SO important. The elders let me know if I need to call anyone, and I put a wee message on our website every day. We send monthly letters out to those not on the internet. We have on line prayer meetings and 'chats'

and time to speak to the young folks too. But I just hope that soon we can get back to meeting together, altho' this is the time when we all need to rethink how we communicate in the days to come.

It's really good that many communities around the island are doing just as you are, and keeping in touch with a 'proper newsletter' - well done! If I can be of help to any of you don't hesitate to send me an e-mail or give a phone, and I'll do what I can - always happy to talk!! At the moment I shall be here until the end of September, and then we'll see after that. Meanwhile I can't think of a better place to be 'looked up' - I mean locked down!

### STAYING IN TOUCH WITH LINDA AND MILESTONE KIRK

#### LINDA BROADLEY

01856 771 599

[lindabroadley@btinternet.com](mailto:lindabroadley@btinternet.com)

#### MILESTONE KIRK

Find us on Facebook

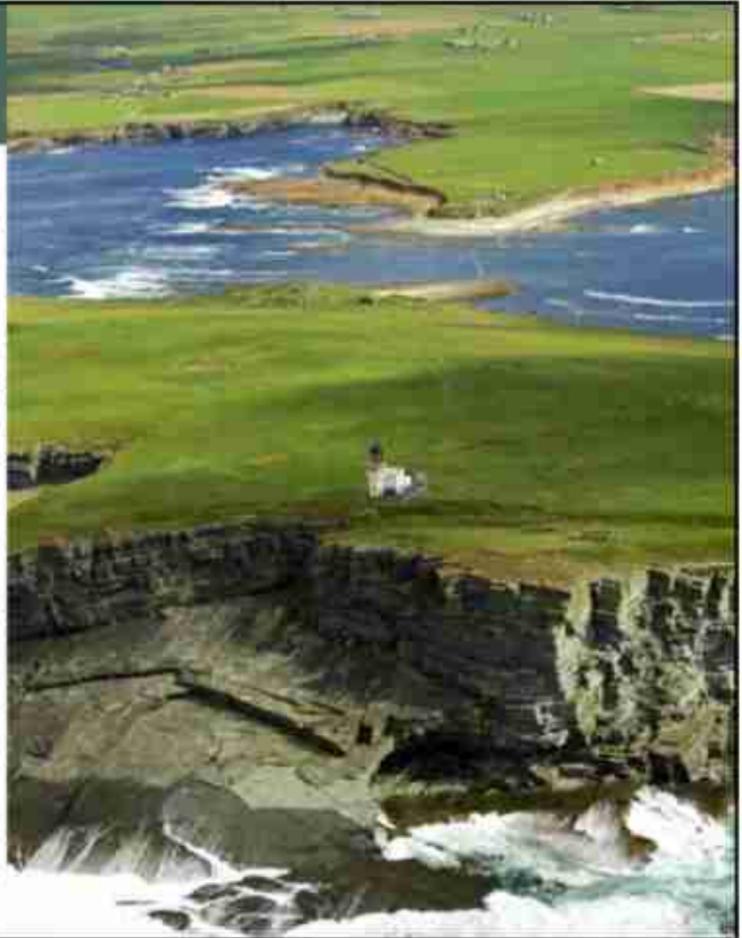


### BBC RADIO ORKNEY 'RADIO CHURCH'

3PM SUNDAYS  
93.7FM & ONLINE

## Birsay Community Council

The last community council meeting held in January had local councillors in attendance as well as a visit from Sarah Money from the RSPB to discuss safety issues at the Marwick Head cliffs. Since this meeting there has been a fence put in place as a safety measure. Nerys Phillips, clerk, has stepped down leaving the clerk position vacant. We would like to thank Nerys and wish her well for the future. Earlier this year the Community Council advertised the position of Grass Cutter for the Birsay Kirkyards and this was awarded to Isbister Bros. Birsay Community Council would like to give their thanks to Kenny Spence for his hard work and dedication in maintaining the kirkyards for the past 9 years. In recent months the way local community councils communicate with OIC has changed due to covid-19. We are unable to meet face to face time being however there is an online meeting weekly where Chairs from each community council are invited to share any local issues with OIC representatives. If you have any concerns relating to covid-19 or any general issues to discuss, please contact Richie Delday, Chairperson, at [delday73@gmail.com](mailto:delday73@gmail.com)



## THE RETURN OF PALACE STORES

Birsay Village's shop has returned following closure in December 2019. The newly revamped facility re-opened in July under new management of Ellis Tait, of Ingsay, Swannay. Now targeted as a small farm shop with a selection of local produce, the shop now also offers waffles, home bakes, ice cream and hot rolls as part of a wider offer. Due to ongoing Covid-19 regulations, the shop can only welcome four customers at any one time with protective screens and sanitiser.

The Post Office facility will continue to be operated by the Finstown postmasters in the St Magnus Kirk on Thursdays, 2-4pm. As advertised on their Facebook page, Palace Stores are encouraging people to place orders of local meat and bakery produce to ensure supply. A copy of produce lists can be found on their Facebook page. At time of publication the shop has seen a busy period with a mix of locals and tourists stopping by.

 /PalaceStores



## OPENING HOURS

**MONDAY TO FRIDAY 09:00-18:00**  
**SUNDAY 11:00-16:00**



**PALACE STORES**

FOOD SHOP WAFFLES HOME BAKES & HOT ROLLS



## KITCHENER MEMORIAL LISTED ON ANTI-RACISM STATUE MAP AMIDST WORLDWIDE PROTESTS



A local anti-racism group has distanced itself from an interactive map website which lists Kitchener Memorial as a “problematic statue” which celebrates Britain’s colonial past. Following worldwide anti-racism protests triggered by the murder of George Floyd — a 46 year old man that died whilst under arrest in Minneapolis, US — has sparked calls to remove statues, memorials and titles across the UK which “celebrate racism and slavery”. The online map aims to highlight “the complicity and history” of the British Empire and slavery.

Tomas Hermoso, of the recently established Orkney Resists campaign group has said the memorial’s inclusion on the map does not reflect the work undertaken by the Orkney Heritage Society in 2016 which also unveiled a memorial to the HM drifter Laurel Crown which was blown up on minesweeping duties just days after the loss of HMS Hampshire.

Under Kitchener’s command during the Second Boer War in South Africa, women and children were ruthlessly sent to disease ridden concentration camps. This is the reason why the monument of Marwick Head has been listed. Kitchener, Britain’s Secretary of State for War, died in 1916 when the HMS Hampshire struck a mine off Marwick Head during WWI. The memorial erected ten years later by the people of Orkney recently underwent a restoration project to mark the centenary which saw the construction of a memorial wall in dedication to the 737 lives lost alongside Lord Kitchener himself.

Mr Hermoso of Orkney Resists told The Orcadian on the recent restoration of the memorial “was a wholly positive action that totally the character of the memorial and should be welcomed. Maybe the correct thing to do would be to rename it the Hampshire Memorial. Effectively Orkney Heritage Society death with the inequality, and that’s a very good thing. Some of our members have been in contact with Topple the Racists as we feel the post in the website doesn’t reflect the changes that have been made to the memorial and as such would be misleading to the wider public, especially out with Orkney as they might not realise the context in which the monument was built and how it has changed.”



