



Christmas Newsletter 2016

Craft Fellow in Boatbuilding

This has been a tremendous success story for our society. Jeff Mackie, our apprentice traditional boatbuilder is half way through his course at the International Boatbuilding Training College at Lowestoft and will soon be home for his Christmas break.

The first part of this success story was securing a two-year Bursary from Historic Environment Scotland which gave financial security and enabled Jeff to quit his work and embark on a two-year training course in traditional wooden boat building, the first year at IBTC Lowestoft and the second year working alongside Ian Richardson here in Orkney to learn the local traditional skills.



As HES were only funding the ‘living wage’ and part of the accommodation and travel costs for the successful candidate OHBS had to come up with the College Fees and the remainder of accommodation and travel costs. A major fundraising effort was launched by our secretary Rod Daniel and he has been successful in attracting sponsorship

from several local businesses as well as impressing the Director of IBTC Lowestoft so much that he waived half the college fee in order to facilitate this initiative.

In March, we advertised the training opportunity in the ‘Orcadian’ and received six applications. From these we made a short list of three excellent candidates for interview. We are confident we selected the best candidate in Jeff who is now one of the outstanding students in the course. Such are his skills that a local boat builder down there has offered him work to help occupy his weekends whilst at College. This is further great experience for Jeff.

You can follow Jeff’s progress by logging on to his online blog at jeffmackieboatbuilder.wordpress.com

Pearl, North Ronaldsay praaam by Rod Daniel

In March 2016 enquiries revealed that one of only 3 surviving praaam dinghies from N Ronaldsay was at risk of total loss and might be available for donation and restoration.

John Tulloch o' Purtabreck had owned 'Pearl' since 1971 and re-registered her K150 on 4/5/1971 for line and creel fishing until 1988 when he moved to a larger new praaam Mary Jane.

Records confirm that she was built in 1926 on North Ronaldsay. It is believed likely that the build was at Milldam by John Cutt probably assisted by others.

She was first registered by William Tulloch o' Ancum as K49 in 1940. Lugsail rigged in the early years an auxiliary motor was added in 1948 and she was registered as a motor vessel until de registered in 1988.



When surveyed in March 2013 *Pearl* was situated at a well sheltered location on the seaward edge of a meadow near the North links, Purtabreck. Her bottom was concealed by bruck and she sat in a static pool of fresh water. Lines were noted to be generally good and visible rot was limited to the gunwale capping and sections of timmers – the majority being intact. Topside strokes (planks) were generally intact with some stable splits and a short section midships Starboard adjacent to the fixed thaft showing localised rot.

In order to assess keel and bottom integrity John Tulloch tractor dragged her out of the wet ground on to an elevated sandy bank after all bruck cleared. She slid out of a muddy berth well with keel integrity evident and only two short sections of bottom boards rotted out – close to where the Nile plug was situated but had blocked. She was heavily Stockholm tarred and this no doubt saved her from extensive loss of strokes below the waterline.



She was stabilised

with two cross beams fitted 'in the field' as her thaft was rotten and this allowed stakes and ground ties to protect from wind whilst the committee were consulted about her recovery and refurbishment prospects. Recovery for refurbishment was approved after research completed and on June 9th John Tulloch gifted *Pearl* to OHBS and she was trailed to the pier for ferry recovery. Sling lift adjacent to the fitted cross beams was planned.



After 3 months drying out at Buchan barn she was transferred to Ian Richardson's yard in early October – taking the space vacated by Skua in late September. A conservation management plan (CMP), based on the model used at Scottish Fisheries Museum, Anstruther (www.scotfishmuseum.org) was drawn up for a pilot on this refurbishment. The cardinal principles of conservation are defined by National Historic Ships with reference to the Australian Burra Charter for the rational conservation

of objects. This requires a logical approach to preservation with Retention, Repair and Renewal being the order of priority – rather than Rebuild.

Detailed photographic records and a diary of procedure and outcomes has been kept. From early October – December 5th phase 1 or CMP 1 was completed with all woodwork deemed necessary to stabilise and retain her integrity internally (work on the keel to follow after turn over). This was approved by Ian Richardson structural Consultant and new OHBS member Janette Park, of the Stromness Museum, from the Curators perspective.



CMP2 or renewal of known finishes to pre-agreed spec is now underway. Matt white and Pearl green on original locations with matt black over old Stockholm tar finishes and selected areas in good condition to be left exposed after clear preservatives only. The new larch stroke repair will be left exposed for the time being pending further discussion.

In the new year, she will be turned over so that agreed keel repairs can be carried out and the exterior CMP2 finishes, including repainting K150 on both sides and her name on the transom, will be applied. She will then return to dry store at Buchan awaiting a berth in the planned Haven at Stromness.

Recovery, research and refurbishment team; Jimmy Clouston, Michael McLaughlin and Rod Daniel.

Supporting the Orkney Museums Service by Michael McLaughlin

For a number of years now OHBS members have been assisting with the restoration and display of boats in the Museums Service collection at the Scapa Flow Visitor Centre and Museum at Lyness.

This year the focus of the OHBS volunteers has been on the historic racing yole *Skua* and the over 100-year-old traditional South Islands yole *Daisy*.



Skua

Skua, built in the early 1930s by William Ritch of Deerness for the Orkney writer Eric Linklater, is quite unique in being built specifically for racing, rather than as a working boat, and featuring an elliptical counter-stern.



She required replacement of her missing garboards, most of her floorboards, all of the decking, including deck beams, a bowsprit, a rudder and tiller, and most of her Thafts (thwarts), as well as some gunwale repairs. In addition to the professional input of local boatbuilder Ian Richardson, funded by grants from Museums Galleries Scotland and Orkney Culture Fund, more than 400 hours of volunteer effort have gone into her restoration so far.

She has now returned to Lyness, where next summer season she will be rigged with a mast, mainsail and jib, before final coats of paint are applied.



Daisy



Daisy was built by in 1910 by James Nicholson of Flotta for William Groat of Hillside, South Wall s. She is a classic example of the South Isles yole with traditional rig of 2 masts, 2 sprit sails, a bowsprit and jib, she has been displayed in a former wartime oil tank for a number of years, but has been suffering from the effects of the damp conditions which has resulted in rusting of ironwork and rotting woodwork, particularly around the gunwales.

After removal from the damp location and being left to 'dry out' for several months, OHBS volunteers worked on her this summer, removing and replacing rotting timbers and treating all rusting ironwork, before starting on an overall makeover of her paintwork.



Next summer we plan to finish painting, including masts, spars and bowsprit before re-rigging her for full display.

Operation Orkney

The BBC had a production team in Orkney most of the summer filming for a mini-series to be shown on BBC 2. The first of three programmes is to be broadcast at the prime time of 9.00pm on Tuesday 2nd January.

The producer approached OHBS to help build a replica 18-foot Neolithic Boat made from Willow branches and Cow Hide so that they could demonstrate boats like these would have been used to transport people and goods throughout Orkney and across the Pentland Firth.

The main thrust of the series is that Orkney was regarded as the centre of Britain in Neolithic times and that the culture evolving here spread to other regions of the British Isles e.g. Stonehenge came after the Ring of Brodgar and the Ness of Brodgar.

Jeff, along with our team of helpers, and others, took about two weeks to build the boat and on August 16th a successful crossing of the Pentland Firth was made with the help of five rowers from Orkney Rowing Club, Jeff, Andy Torbet (the BBC presenter) and a cameraman.

The Neolithic replica boat was then gifted to OHBS and is currently in storage at Buchan Farm along with our other boats and hopefully in the future will be a unique exhibit in our Boat Haven.

The BBC asked us not to publish any photographs of the boat until the program had been aired, hence no photos in this article.

Tankerness House Museum Exhibition

OHBS took up the invitation from Sandra Henry (Orkney College Marine Archaeologist) to provide an exhibition of our work at Tankerness House Museum for their Spring Exhibition. As we were unable to exhibit a boat we opted to display a series of photographs depicting our achievements in the restoration of various boats along with some marine equipment and boatbuilders tools. Rod Daniel provided two Naval Oars which he had



meticulously restored. Michael McLaughlin provided the photos and Ian Richardson the tools and equipment. Other exhibitors were Mark Shiner who displayed his work on sail making, knots and ropework and Sandra Henry who displayed some course material from the University of the Highlands and Islands Maritime Archaeology Department at Orkney College.

Orkney Boat Haven

A great deal of work has been going on behind the scenes this year in our efforts to progress the establishment of a Boat Haven. We prefer to adopt the name 'Haven' at this stage rather than 'Museum' for technical and legal reasons.

We are currently in negotiation with a private land owner in efforts to secure a building which we have identified as suitable, in the first instance, to use as storage for our boats and later to purchase outright. Further to that we have commissioned a team of consultants to produce a Feasibility Study to guide us as to the viability and sustainability of such a project.

95% of the funding required for the Feasibility Study has been secured from Orkney Islands Council Community Development Fund and LEADER funding. LEADER funding is provided by European and Scottish Government Funds.

The team of consultants carrying out the study consists of Brian Burns - Economic Consultant, Leslie Burgher – Architect and Billy Groundwater – Quantity Surveyor. They have already begun the ‘Study’ which should complete it by the end of April.

Assuming the Feasibility Study comes out in favour of the project we would begin a major fundraising effort to secure funds to purchase the building initially with a view to adapting it to include a display area, a workshop where our volunteers can renovate boats, a café/shop with toilets and a cinema/display area.

Tern

Willie Waters recently alerted us to the fact that an old Orkney Yole was about to be burnt as it was in the way of a new development at the Sea Cadet Centre at Scapa. He let us know that if we wanted it we had to remove it within the week. A site visit was hastily arranged to view the boat and determine whether it was worth recovering. Having seen the boat and deciding that she was recoverable, with only the deck needing to be replaced, we began background research and discovered that the boat, called Tern, was a rare Stroma Yole circa 1896 and already we have established that she has had owners in Stromness, Stronsay and Auskerry prior to ending up in Kirkwall.

Her sister ship, Hope, is soon to be re-decked by Ian Richardson and we intend to have the Tern re-decked at the same time by our volunteers.



Website and Facebook page

You can keep up to date with the latest ‘goings on’ by visiting our website at www.ohbs.org ably managed by Roy Bichan and/or our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/orkneyhistoricboatsociety/> which is kept up to date by Michael McLaughlin. You can visit the page even if you don’t have a Facebook account.

Wishing you a happy festive season.

Jimmy Clouston (Chairman)