



Christmas Newsletter

2017

Merry Christmas to all OHBS members

2017 has been a very full year for OHBS. I trust that the articles in this, our annual, newsletter will give you a flavour of our many and varied activities.

Craft Fellow in Boatbuilding by Rod Daniel

Jeff completed the City and Guilds (London) diploma at the International Boatbuilding Training College, Lowestoft in September. Having passed all exams marked to date, four with distinction, Jeff arrived home in time to decorate the nursery and become a dad on September 30th. Ailsa and mum, Catriona, were well enough to allow Jeff to re-join Ian Richardson in mid October for the remaining months of the two year Craft Fellowship funded by Historic Environment Scotland and OHBS.

The IBTC's motto, 'Building boatbuilders', was soon to be put to the test. Ian had planned an action packed Fellowship, agreed with HES' Steve Townsend who attended the workshop to offer encouragement. The centrepiece of this training period is a new-build traditional Orkney boat. With the support of the Westray Community it had been agreed that a replica of the ruinous Skiff Zulu was a suitable project and after a short spell poring over a set of plans and warming up by helping Ian refurbishing Yole Gerta the new build began.

Starting Jeff's first 'double ender' involved an immediate change in approach from college thinking and isolated exercises on separate boats. Adopting a systematic approach, required of a new boat in build, where each step of the pathway has a logical sequence is a learning experience in itself. Jeff has made tremendous progress with the 'bottom boards' being home including six single length strokes and the first scarfed pair finished by mid December. Ian is rarely far away and with his light touch teaching style the transfer of knowledge and skills is well underway.



Master and apprentice

One of the challenges in the real world is carrying out the complex construction tasks in a timely fashion so that the costed project retains its margin by delivery. Ian is gently guiding Jeff on technique whilst keeping the reality of the open market world in mind. It is gratifying to witness the increased speed and confidence that Jeff is displaying with the fitting of each stroke with 8 home and 10 to go on Zulu2. Making the floors comes next whilst waist height access is easy.

Ahead lie exercises in several other skill sets; engine bed preparation, propeller shaft boring, clinker and carvel plank repairs, spar-making and rigging. As Jeff tackles these with the same determination and confidence that we have seen so far Orkney will be fortunate in having a very skilled boatbuilder to carry on the tradition of excellence.

Ph.D. Research Projects

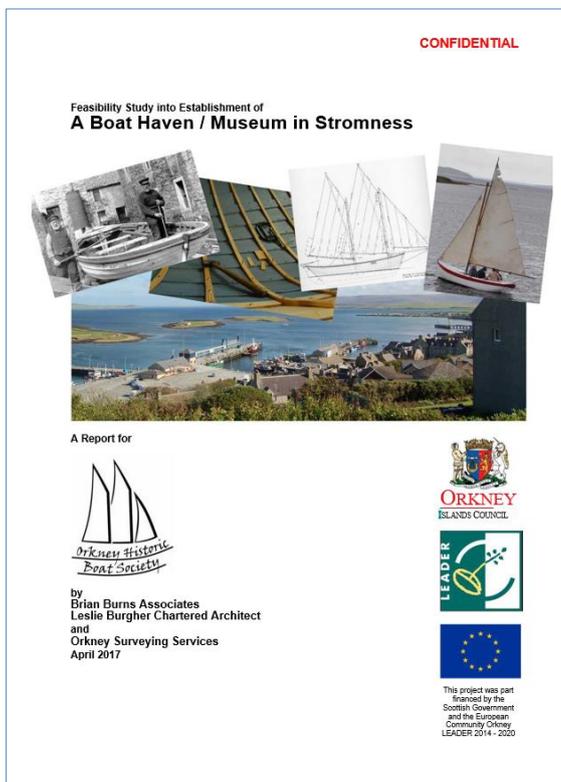
Two students have approached OHBS this year for input into their Ph.D. projects.

Eirini Gallou from the University of Central London Institute for Sustainable Heritage received input to her Thesis titled "Sustainable Heritage and Community Development on island context: investigation of reciprocal links". Her Ph.D. project is investigating the ways through which community engagement in heritage can contribute to both sustainable heritage projects and socially sustainable communities in an island context.

The other student, Cait McCullagh, is studying "Curating Heritage for Sustainable Communities in Highly Vulnerable Environments: The Case of Scotland's Northern Isles" at the Intercultural Research Centre Herriot Watt University supported by a partnership of Shetland Museum and Archives, Orkney Museums, the UHI Centre for Nordic Studies and Learning for Sustainability Scotland. Further details of her ongoing research can be found at

<http://irc.hw.ac.uk/research/sqsah-arcs.html>

Orkney Boat Haven



Another year has passed, and we are not much further on although a great deal of work has been done on this topic. Our Feasibility Study, mentioned in last year's newsletter, was duly delivered in April by the team of Brian Burns, Leslie Burgher and Billy Groundwater.

The main objectives of the study were to:

- Assist the Society to determine the best way forward for the acquisition and development of a site.
- Consider the achievability and financial viability of this option.

One site we considered is in private ownership whilst the other is the property of Orkney Islands Council. Despite much negotiation the site in private ownership has not become available, so our efforts will now concentrate on the site owned by OIC.

We have had several meetings with top officials in the Council and feel we are beginning to make progress.

Orkney Islands Council have agreed that the establishment of a boat Haven would be ideal for the site

and are prepared to lease or sell the site to us. Currently, the Government District Valuation Service are in the process of providing a valuation and will report jointly to OIC and OHBS. We expect this to be ready by the end of January. If the cost is within our reach, we will begin the process of applying for grants to move the process on.

Portsoy Boat Festival by Rod Daniel

In April OHBS were approached by Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, Portsoy (www.stbfportsoy.org.uk) management. We attended their visit to Kirkwall where their hopes for more sailing craft to attend were explained in the context of a reduction in the number of sailing exhibits over recent years. A healthy contingent of coastal rowing boats, including ORC, had been expanding year on year and with their 25th anniversary in 2018 this summer was to be a dress rehearsal for more offshore sail activity.

Northlink Ferries as major sponsors were prepared to transport approved entries and their crew. Northlink also offered to transport the replica hide Neolithic rowing boat which had featured in the BBC's Britain's Ancient Capital; Secrets of Orkney after OHBS volunteers assisted with its construction and now own the boat.

After some discussion with the Orkney Yole Association the decision not to enter the club boat *Lily* was taken. OHBS do not currently own a seagoing yole so it was agreed that *Waterwitch*, a rebuilt 1923 Longhope yole, launched in Stromness in 2015 would take up the challenge although it was known from the outset that she is a heavy, beamy boat for a current sailing yole!

Owner Rod Daniel with helmsman Jimmy Clouston and Michael McLaughlin made up the crew and accompanied by Ian Richardson, Boatbuilder, who was invited to display a stand in the Craft section, set out South by the early ferry on June 23rd.

OHBS were also represented by skipper / owner Brian Pottinger's motor yacht *Ewing McGruer*, crewed by Smith Foubister, who made the journey by sea.



Waterwitch as a shore exhibit with the Ewing McGruer in the background



Orkney Rowing Club boats in the foreground with the Ewing McGruer in the background

We arrived at high water to find a melee around the slipway as numerous small boats took to the water. By the time the slip was clear there was insufficient water to launch *Waterwitch* which had been allocated a berth in the old harbour and was scheduled to sail in an event at 11.00 on Saturday. On close inspection the silt and sand on the slipway was found to be a real problem for the weight of our trailer. We also found that the allocated berth in the 'Old harbour' was very shallow and not suitable so a decision was made to display *Waterwitch* as a shore exhibit and not risk a launch at 01.00 with the owner having to spend the night aboard! Brian and Smith had arrived without incident and were berthed against a lifeboat set against the outer wall of the 'New' harbour.

Jimmy's sister and niece stay in Portsoy and we were very fortunate to have a wonderful welcome and town centre accommodation for 3 nights. Our plan was to leave on the Monday and visit Cullen en-route home.

The Festival experienced reasonable weather - better on the Saturday than Sunday. The sailing event was well attended on Saturday but by Sunday the wind had freshened to the point where sailing was pretty limited. The rowers took the conditions in hand with ORC's performance on the Saturday being very satisfactory. Sunday's sea going events were curtailed.

In the Northlink marquee the Neolithic hide boat became a major visitor attraction, so much so that it was just as well that our yole sailing had been cancelled! All hands-on deck were required to answer numerous questions ranging from the sensible and well informed to the 'Two Ronnies' end of the spectrum. My favourite was 'How many dog skins did you use on her'. I think he had already visited the beer tent!



Michael McLaughlin fielding intense interest in the Neolithic boat.



Ian Richardson at his Craft Display Stand

Ian's craft display was very well attended in the same venue as Mark Shiner of Stromness Navigation School (and OHBS member) with a traditional rope-work display. Ian was stationed next to his peer from Shetland and between them numerous visitor's enquiries were fielded.



Mark Shiner demonstrating ropework and sail making.



Jeff Mackie with his boss Mike Tupper on the IBTC stand.

Nearby the IBTC Lowestoft stand manned by owner / manager Mike Tupper displayed College material and current student Jeff Mackie had travelled up with Mike to renew acquaintances and make new contacts.

Sunday was very blustery with heavy showers and lower visitor numbers were seen. However, once again, the stands were well attended and *Waterwitch* and *Ewing McGruer* had their fair share of visitors. I had a peep below on the *Ewing* on Sunday - a real credit to Brian and Smith who had lovingly restored this classic boat built at Pia Anderson's yard, Ness Point, Stromness and named after the famous Clyde yard owner. A lot of interest was noted at all our exhibits and some new contacts were made.

Early on Sunday a Norwegian delegation from the Forbundet Kysten, a federation for the use and preservation of historical vessels and coastal environment, (www.kysten.no) gave a presentation. Contact with their director Tore has been maintained by Michael, our Vice Chairman and Archivist, in the hope that we can learn more about the availability of skills and materials to assist with work on the two Norwegian Oselvar boats at Scapa Flow Visitor Centre, Lyness in due course.



Michael McLaughlin, Jimmy Clouston, Ian Richardson, Rod Daniel towed *Waterwitch* from Orkney to Portsoy and back. Ian took his craft stand material in his own van.

A weather eye was kept by Brian during Sunday evening as a wind-shift and strengthening was anticipated. Despite taking precautions the high tide and ebb in the small hours placed *Ewing McGruer* into a lean onto the adjacent boat resulting in pressure and some superstructure damage to both boats by the morning.

All in all, we felt this to have been a worthwhile trip. OHBS' presence was appreciated by many. However, if we are returning with similar sized boats, more favourable berthing accommodation and timed slots for launching, according to draft, would be negotiated unless the harbour authorities get going with a serious dredging programme.

En- route home on Monday we had been invited by OHBS member Steve Brockman of Cullen to stop and see yole *Laverne* in her harbourside shed. *Laverne* had been boatbuilder Andy Dunnett of Stromness' racing yole. Built in the 1930's she is recorded as competing with *Skua* and *Esmeralda* back in the day. For some years she lay in a noust on the Stromness shore until bought by Steve who plans to refurbish and sail her in retirement.

Everyone got home safely for the trailer and *Ewing McGruer*. New friends were made and there were definitely some positive publicity for OHBS.

Feedback to the Portsoy managers covered our sentiments and we await an invitation to the 25th event in 2018!

Neolithic Boat/Ness of Brodgar Display by Michael McLaughlin

Our replica Neolithic hide boat, which was built by OHBS volunteers for the BBC TV series *Orkney: The Ancient Capital of Britain*, and which was successfully paddled across the treacherous Pentland Firth in under 5 hours almost exactly one year ago



last summer, was in great demand for public display in summer 2017.



In June, under the sponsorship of Northlink Ferries, the boat visited the annual Scottish Traditional Boat Festival at Portsoy. Thereafter followed a display at boatbuilder Ian Richardson's yard in Stromness (where the replica boat was built) for the Stromness Per Mare Festival, celebrating the Town's 200th anniversary of attaining Burgh of Barony status. Finally, the boat was displayed at the Ness of Brodgar archaeological excavation site during their two Open Days in July and August.

The boat proved to be a great attraction, with many people, locals and visitors alike, enjoying the opportunity to see in 'real life' the replica hide boat which they had watched in the TV series, as well as the chance to ask questions of some members of both the construction team and the paddling crew about the many challenges that were presented by the project.



Project diary, Lyness, 2017 by Rod Daniel

Racing Yole 'Skua'.

Jan-Feb; Preparation of rigging, blocks etc.

March; Mast stepped, and a gaff spar made and set to new rigging.

April; Spring saw the search for an appropriate pair of period sails based upon enquiries in Stromness. Sails loaned by OHBS were seen on display during the year. However, these were oversized after necessary mast shortening, and the main seen was a large Jib from the era. In September we were lucky enough to achieve a better fit on the Jib donated by Harvey Dunnett of Stromness.

May; Project finished, OIC press release and publicity in Orcadian.



Yole 'Daisy'. **June;** Hull painting finished with coloured details picked out and refurbishment with new running rigging completed. 'Daisy' is the only example of an undecked Yole at Lyness, the other yoles being 1/2 decked as seen on Foam and Lizzie.

Dinghy 'Primrose'. **July;** Mast and lugsail were found during 2016. A new bowsprit was made, and she was re rigged as a dipping lugger.

Yole 'Foam'. Main reef was re set and new running rigging fitted.

Montague Whaler. **August.** She had not been rigged since acquired for the collection and after finding the original sails with a heavy weather 'Trysail' research was done to ensure that she was refurbished accurately. We were fortunate to meet a visiting retired RN officer who gave helpful pointers. Masts and various components were found in store and the yardarm repaired.





September; New rudder yoke and running rigging fitted. Both the Lugsail and Trysail rig variations were raised with the Trysail working best for display with the available roof height. Curators decision on repainting is pending and minor repairs ongoing.

'Lizzie' & Norwegian Øselvar. September-October. Localised rust treatment of steel fixings. Anti-corrosion spot treatment Lizzie.

During October plans for refurbishment of Scapa Flow Visitor Centre next year were announced and as the museum closed we de rigged all boats for storage during 2018.

November; Under curator's directions all 13 boats and gear were labelled for formal cataloguing and to assist display in 2019.

Acquisitions

'Falcon' K418

by Michael McLaughlin

The square-sterned dinghy, Falcon, was built in 1927 by James Rosie (1869 - 1951) who lived on the small island of Swona, in the Pentland Firth. For many years she was a much-appreciated attraction at the top of the beach at Herston, South Ronaldsay. However, in recent years her condition had deteriorated to the stage where she was in danger of being lost to the elements forever.

She has now been gifted to the OHBS by the owners Cyril and Martin Annal, descendants of the boatbuilder James Rosie, together with a significant contribution towards the cost of restoration materials.

With OHBS volunteers providing the manpower, supplemented by the professional skills of boatbuilder Ian Richardson, a conservation plan is now in progress.



Despite the wet and wintry weather of late, the work of removing rotting timber has had to be done outside in order to minimise the possibility of rot spore spread in workshop spaces. That task having been completed, the keel, sternpost and deadwoods have now been renewed in Opepe, with top quality larch being used on the transom section.

By mid December it is hoped that the midline structure assembly will be ready for stainless steel bolts and final assembly, before putting her into storage to dry out fully prior to further restoration work.

Bulldog

Bulldog, gifted to us by Kenny Pirie, is an example of an unusually beamy yole, lightly built with a shallow draft and plumb stem. She was built in Finstown in the 1920's for a farmer in Evie by either Matches or Mackay and was used to carry grain and flour. Built for sail she was regarded as a very 'safe' boat. When the farm in Evie was sold she was bought by a farmer in Wyre who also used her for the transportation of grain to the mill in Rousay and then to take the flour home. After WW2 she was sold to a fisherman in Rousay who fitted an engine. In 1967 she was sold to Duncan Pirie in St Ola who used her to transport goods and people back and forth to Cava and Longhope from Houton. She has been tidied up and stored inside to dry out before further work is done to restore her to original.



Shownia



Although a Shetland Model Shownia has been on Orkney long enough to justify being added to our collection especially as she was built by Walter Duncan of Hamnavoe, Burra who is widely regarded as a one of the finest boat builders. Donated by Dr Dorhn she was collected by our 'acquisitions' team in November. Built in 1938/39 she was one of the last boats built by Walter Duncan before he handed over his business to Walter Duncan Jr in 1939.

She was built for Jack Shearer in Thurso as a pleasure boat used mainly for racing. We have all the original correspondence between the two as

well as photos of her early days. Helen Mackenzie, Jack Shearer's daughter, took her to Orkney and left her to Dr Dorhn who continued to make good use of her as a pleasure boat.



Cingallee



Having been on our radar for some time this boat became available this year as we learned she was about to be destroyed. We are still in the process of trying to find out more of her history but what we do know is quite interesting.

We know that she was used to transport supplies to the Naval fleet in Scapa Flow in WW1 reputedly by a French woman. After that she became part of JFM Groat's fleet in Longhope and he used her to supply naval ships during WW2. After the war she was

taken on by Arnold Grieve, JFM Groat's brother in law, who fitted a Perkins London Taxi engine replacing the Scripps Lorry engine that was in her. He renewed the stem and stern as well as fully renovating her and making her into the cabin cruiser seen here anchored in Kirkwall Basin.



Other boats

A few other boats have been promised to us this year but the official paperwork still has to be completed before we can take them on.

Irene is a 'North Isles Yole' built in Sanday in the early 1900's. She was renovated some years ago and is still in good condition.

Albert Spence's Light Speedboat. Built by James Duncan, Burray, in the 1930s for Harry Forbes. Albert bought her from Eoin Bews in Egilsay in 1964. In very good condition and comes with an Archimedes Penta Outboard Engine also in very good condition.

Doris built by John Renton Baikie in Stromness who also built the racing yole 'Laverne' and the dinghy 'Dido'. A very nice yole in good condition.

Voice Recordings

Two more interviews have been added to our sound archive this year, Robin Duncan, Burray and Ivan Hourston, Shapinsay.

These interviews can be found on our website www.ohbs.org at <https://soundcloud.com/orkney-historic-boats/robin-duncan-290317>

and

<https://soundcloud.com/orkney-historic-boats/ivan-hourston>

Both these boat builders were very active and built many wooden boats of all types in the boom years of the 1960's, 70's and 80's.

Website and Facebook page

Much of what we do is recorded on our website and Facebook pages and you can keep up-to-date with our activities throughout the year.

The website www.ohbs.org is managed by Roy Bichan and our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/orkneyhistoricboatsociety/> by Michael McLaughlin.

I hope you have enjoyed this newsletter.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Jimmy Clouston (Chairman)