



Newsletter No 07 Spring 2012

Orkney Archaeology Society

Scottish Charity No SC030611

Editorial

Chris Read

The Editor @ PO Box 6213, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1YD

Welcome to your Spring 2012 newsletter. We are looking forward to another busy year for archaeology in Orkney with several excavations:

Links of Noltland, Westray

EASE Archaeology are already back on site for this season – visitors welcome but bear in mind their lunch break usually 1-2pm and they cannot take tours after about 4pm as they need time at the end of the day to sort out & pack up.

Dig blog on the Westray Heritage Centre website: <http://www.westrayheritage.co.uk/> then hold your mouse over the Westray's Archaeology link on the left hand side and choose one of the blog options

General information about the site at: <http://linksofnoltland.co.uk/index.html>

Ness of Brodgar

ORCA will open the site to visitors from 18th July to 22nd August 2012. There will be site tours at 11am & 3pm and an Open Day on 19th August 2012. As in previous years there will be a shop on site run by Orkney Archaeology Society

Orkneyjar has a mini-site for Ness of Brodgar hosting the dig blog, and lots of other information:

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/archaeology/nessofbrodgar/>

The Cairns, Windwick, South Ronaldsay

This site, directed by Martin Carruthers, Archaeology Dept, Orkney College UHI, will be open from 18 June to 13 July, there will also be an open day advertised locally.

Articles on Orkneyjar covering the site can be found here:

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/archaeology/tag/the-cairns/>

Hoy & South Walls

ORCA are running a survey & geophysics training programme in June in Hoy & will be working at Cantick, South Walls again in September.

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/archaeology/2010/07/09/untangling-the-history-of-the-cantick-mound/>

North Atlantic Biocultural Organisation (NABO) fieldschool, Rousay

The fieldschool will be running during June/July and there will be an open day advertised locally.

As mentioned in the Autumn 2011 newsletter OAS will be taking over the Blue Door Charity Shop in Albert Street, Kirkwall for a week in June as part of our fundraising effort for 2012. We are still collecting the enormous quantities of stock that we will require in order to adequately stock the shop. Please see the article below for further details.

Finally, this will be my last newsletter as editor for the time being as I am standing down from the committee. I am sure you will join me in wishing my successor all the best for future editions.

OAS at the Blue Door*Sue Barnard, Honorary Secretary*

Everyone in Orkney knows the Blue Door but our other OAS members may not be so familiar with this wonderful charity opportunity.

The Blue Door is the name of a charity shop which, rather than collect for one charity, opens its (blue!) door to a different local charity each week to collect on behalf of that. We are very fortunate in having been able to secure the Blue Door for a week in June. From Monday 4th – Friday 8th June OAS will be in the Blue Door and this is where we need your help.

We are looking for

- **STOCK!** Anything you feel would sell in a charity shop. Clean clothes and footwear, books, brick a brac, household goods etc. We need loads and loads and won't be able to run the shop without it so PLEASE bring us your (saleable) bruck! Bring it along to an OAS meeting between now and then or call by the Harray Potter (Andrew Appleby, Fursbreck Pottery, Harray) who will happily take it from you or email OAS via our website to arrange collection. Alternatively call Sue (secretary) on 01856 721324 if you have anything to donate. We would like to thank Peter and Joan Aim of Fursbreck Farm for allowing us to use their shed to store the donations – so let's fill it up! The Blue Door has a policy of stacking high and selling low so the shop footfall is enormous and the potential for raising over £2000 is there but only if we have stuff to sell. So please start sorting out the attic, spare room and wardrobes and see what you can donate. All proceeds will go to the Daphne Lorimer Bursary Fund to support a student on the MA Archaeology Practice and thereby continue the great archaeology work in Orkney.
- **VOLUNTEERS!** If you can spare half a day during this period to help out at the Blue Door unpacking bags and stacking shelves, selling raffle tickets etc please contact Sue (OAS Secretary) on 01856 721324 or email OAS via the website. Your Society needs you!
- **RAFFLE PRIZES!** No event in Orkney is the same without a raffle and the Blue Door is no exception. If you have that extra special (but not needed) gift or other donation of the usual wine, chocolate etc please let us know or bring it along to the Blue Door on Monday 4th June.
- **THANK YOU** in advance. If you can help we would be most grateful and if you can't but would like to support the Daphne Lorimer Bursary Fund again this year we would be happy to accept donations made payable to Orkney Archaeology Society with a note saying you would like this to go to the Bursary Fund to OAS, PO Box 6213, Kirkwall, Orkney KW15 1YD.

My Year on Orkney*Jayne Bell, OAS Daphne Lorimer Bursary recipient in 2011*

My name is Jayne Bell and I am the student who received the Daphne Lorimer Bursary for the MA Archaeological Practice for the academic year 2011-2012. This year has been great, but I still cannot believe that I am now finished the course, it's a strange feeling! However, I am looking forward to coming

back to Orkney in the summer to dig at the Ness of Brodgar once again for six weeks.

My background is a History BA, as well as undertaking numerous archaeology modules within this degree. I realised during my undergraduate degree that I much preferred archaeology to history, and when I applied to

do this course, Orkney also seemed like such an amazing place to study archaeology, which it most certainly is! Archaeology is just such a fascinating and enjoyable subject, and one which I hope to make a career out of.

During this year I have gained many useful skills and learnt a great deal. I have taken on numerous modules, including geophysical survey, as well as archaeological survey, two subjects that gave me practical skills, and which I found to be very interesting and useful. I was also involved in the Ness of Brodgar excavations during last year's season. I loved the experience so much, and I cannot wait to be back there again this summer. I was mainly excavating in structures 11 and 14 at this site. I also dug on Wyre at The Braes Of Ha'breck for a couple of days last year prior to the Ness of Brodgar, which was a great experience, and made me realise how much I love excavating, as I hadn't done any excavations before this. I grew up watching Time Team however, which is how my love of archaeology began!

One of the other modules which I undertook during my MA was Vikings and Norse in the North Atlantic, a module which I found to be very interesting indeed, and the subject of which I wrote my dissertation on. The title of my dissertation is 'Viking oval brooches in a Scottish burial context'. Here is the abstract for this piece of work, taken from my dissertation:

The Viking oval brooch is an artefact which has been designated as reflecting social status within the countries of Norway and Iceland in the context of burial of this period. This type of brooch has been noted to be part of the Viking woman's dress, and therefore is only associated with female Viking graves. This dissertation will aim to compare this data from these two countries with data collected from descriptions of, and other information on, Scottish female Viking burials, in order to see if social status is reflected the same way in Viking Age Scotland as it is in Norway and Iceland. Another brooch of further form, including the trefoil, equal-armed and penannular brooch, which are additionally found within some female Viking graves, will

also be looked at, as this brooch may show the deceased woman as being of a higher social status.

This dissertation did show that there was a difference between these countries, in that the Scottish female Viking burials, through the oval brooches, did not show social status in the same way as that of Icelandic and Norwegian female burials from this Age.

Another part of being in Orkney was of course the exploration of these amazing set of islands, including the visiting of many of the archaeological monuments within Orkney, such as the monuments in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, the cairns of Cuween and Wideford, the Dwarfie Stane on Hoy, several sites on Westray including the Links of Noltland, the Knap o' Howar on Papa Westray, the amazing Neolithic tomb on the Holm of Papa Westray, as well as several of the many archaeological sites on Rousay. If I had to choose a favourite tomb however, it would have to be Quoyness Cairn on Sanday. I just found this to be an incredible feat of engineering, with the numerous cells off the main chamber. I also had fun crawling through it, as I did with several other cairns and tombs; it is a great way to spend a bit of time!! Skara Brae would have to be my other favourite site. I have been there a few times now, and each time is just as amazing. The fact that stone furniture is still there is just incredible.

Finally, I have to say thank you again to the OAS for the bursary, it has been such a great experience and it is one which I will never forget. Below are a few of the photos which I have taken whilst being here, including some that were taken at the Ness of Brodgar.



Photo 1: The Ness of Brodgar site with the Loch of Harray in the background.



Photo 4. A stone dresser within one of the buildings at Skara Brae. Also showing a hearth and stone setting for a bed.



Photo 2: Part of structure 11 at the Ness of Brodgar, showing a stone slab with a notch in it.



Photo 5: The Dwarfie Stane, Hoy



Photo 3: The Ness of Brodgar looking from the North East corner of trench P.



Photo 6: The interior of one of the houses at the Knap o' Howar, Papa Westray

Geophysical Survey of the Loch of Stenness, Orkney

Richard Bates, Scottish Oceans Institute, University of St Andrews

Martin Bates, Department of Archaeology, University of Wales Trinity St David

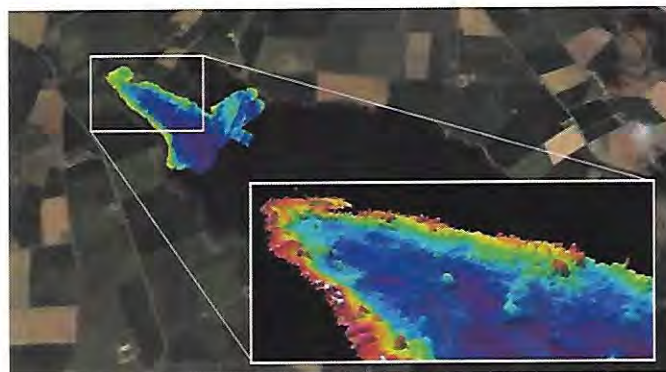
Sue Dawson, Department of Geography, University of Dundee

Caroline Wickham-Jones, Department of Archaeology, University of Aberdeen

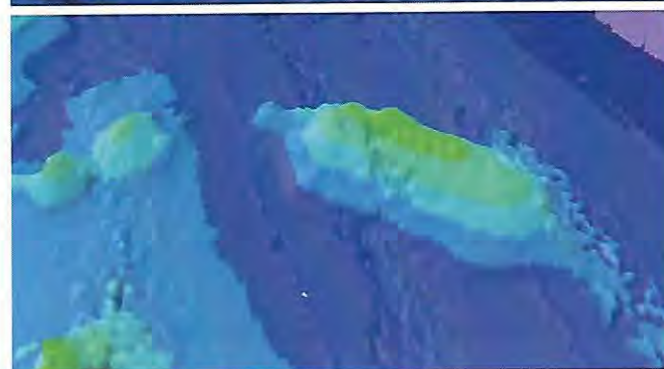
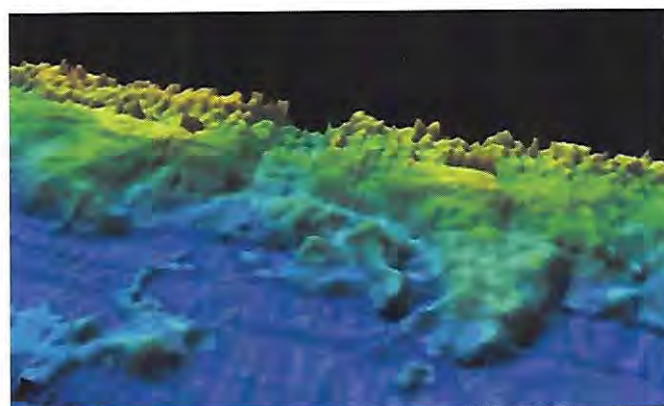
The Loch of Stenness, Orkney is located to the west of the World Heritage sites of the Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness. The loch was targeted for investigation as a potential drowned palaeo-landscape based on preliminary results from a series of sediment cores acquired in 2008 that indicated inundation by the sea to have occurred between 2000 – 1500 BC thus indicating the possibility of an archaeological footprint relating to sites and monuments on the present seafloor. In addition, photographic evidence suggested that certain loch shore earthwork sites might continue into the water.



The archaeological survey first reviewed aerial photographic records, satellite images, historic maps, and local knowledge followed by a visual inspection of the shoreline to design a detailed land and marine geophysical archaeological survey. The land geophysical survey was targeted on the Peninsula of Unstan where an incomplete ring or circular feature was identified extending into the loch. Electromagnetic and electrical imaging geophysics were used to map the feature and to determine its depth extent. The imaging showed a ground disturbance associated with the feature however this did not appear to be deeply founded with its base above the bedrock outcrop on the west side of the peninsula. No evidence was found offshore.



A multibeam sonar survey was conducted in September 2011 and February 2012. Both surveys were compromised by poor weather conditions (summer work is impractical due to nesting birds), however a number of useful results were acquired. The area immediately to the west of the Ring of Brodgar showed a large (100m diameter) circular structure.



To the north of the loch at Voy small (<30m) diameter submerged mounds were mapped at 50-60m from the present shoreline. To the west side of the loch a long (50x20m,) smooth sided, 2.5m high mound occurs in 4m water

depth approximately 200m from the shore. Future work will include diving and further survey to help interpret these features.

This work was funded by the Royal Archaeological Institute and the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Thanks to Andrew Appleby, Sarah Jane Gibbon, Sue Ovenden and Alistair Wilson of Rose Geophysics, Orkney Trout fishing Association.

Three millennia of burial at Roeberry barrow

Daniel Lee (Project Officer, ORCA)

Excavations at Roeberry Barrow, Cantick, South Walls, concluded this season. This was the culmination of three seasons of work at the site, and it has taken this long to unpick the complexity of this fascinating monument. We knew the mound contained several phases with Bronze Age cremation cists and a square barrow last season. However, the burial associated with the square barrow remained elusive, as did the earlier phases of the monument. The trench, originally consisting of two opposing quadrants, was extended to the east to further investigate the partly excavated central stone lined cist. The aim was to expose the edge of the large central depression that was defined by substantial upright slabs. The rubble filled depression was previously thought to represent a large disturbed central cist, however, earlier phases of the mound turned out to be far more monumental.

Excavations this season revealed that the first phase of the monument consisted of a small stalled Neolithic tomb measuring c.3m by 2m internally with six large orthostats (upright slabs) forming two opposing pairs of stalls. The tomb was aligned NE-SW with an entrance to the NE (unexcavated). There are many examples of stalled tombs in Orkney with perhaps the most famous at Mid Howe, Rousay. The tomb at Roeberry was considerably smaller, but appeared to have been well constructed.

The concentric external stone revetment walls exposed during previous seasons formed the outside of the tomb (c.10m in diameter). The large central depression that was partly excavated last season turned out to be the

robbed remains of the NW cell, and the inner wall had been removed. This explained why the interpretation of this part of the monument was difficult, as we had chosen to excavate into an area that had been disturbed and robbed of stone. Not in the 19th century as previously thought (however much of the mound was disturbed at this time), but when the square barrow was built in the Iron Age. The tomb was not fully excavated and this stall was the only part to be investigated at floor level.



A possible post-hole was discovered below the robbed internal wall line, perhaps representing a construction marker, and charcoal was recovered for radiocarbon dating. Interestingly, no human remains were recovered. Perhaps they were removed before the mound was sealed up in the Bronze Age?

Several stone-lined cists were inserted into the mound after the Neolithic tomb had been backfilled. The cists contained cremation burials and probably date to the Bronze Age. A third cist (c.0.80 x 0.49 x 0.62m), which had been inserted into the top of the backfilled

tomb entrance, was discovered this season. This confirms that the tomb was completely backfilled when this cist was constructed. The cist had previously been disturbed and there was no evidence of a cremation burial. Unburnt human bone was found in the vicinity and the cist could have contained an inhumation burial.

The key discovery this season was the remains of an inhumation burial in the central cist. This relates to the substantial stone constructed square barrow that was built into the mound in the last major phase of use. The insertion of this cist involved removing and breaking several large orthostats that formed part of the Neolithic tomb and cutting into the central structure of the mound. The central inhumation had been disturbed, most likely by antiquarians, and only the hands and feet remained in situ.



The body was crouched and laid on the left side. The remains of a juvenile inhumation, also crouched and placed on the left side, was found outside the central cist to the NE within a layer of rubble.



The unburnt human bone found across the mound, especially in the north cist and around the central area, probably derives from these disturbed burials. The remains of the neonate burials found in 2009 adjacent to the SW Bronze Age cist could also date to this phase. These burial rites and the square barrow architecture suggests that this phase of the monument dates to the Iron Age and possibly the first few centuries AD. It is tempting to think of this history of burial as some form of long held continuity. However, the investment seems to be in the significance of place and the importance of the mound in the local landscape at various times. Certainly there is a history of burial, however each phase broke somewhat with that before. For example, the construction of the Bronze Age cists cut into the main walls of the Neolithic tomb. Similarly, the construction of the square barrow involved violently smashing upright slabs and a complete remodelling of the mound, inside and out. Excavations this season have confirmed the long history of construction and burial at Roeberry Barrow from the Neolithic to the Iron Age, and demonstrates that the monument was a significant place for the prehistoric communities at Cantick for several millennia.

Future Grooved Ware Experiments

Andrew Appleby, OAS Vice Chair

This summer OPPRA will conduct further experimentation into Orkney's Grooved Ware.

Firstly, Michael Lucas, student from Willamette University will be creating Grooved Ware at Fursbreck Pottery for firing in the spoil heap at the Ness of Brodgar. {Courtesy of Nick Card} This will further test pot firing within a midden heap.

Last season a huge Grooved Ware vessel was excavated at The Ness by Dr Martin Carruthers. This was on its side and displayed signs of intense heat-work. It is my **personal** belief that this pot was used as a form of oven.



It is intended to test this theory with a large decorated pot made by Dr. Tim Palmer from clay retrieved from Skail Bay. This may help to explain the intense burning, oxidisation and reduction inside the vessel.



Keep checking our website for updates.

http://www.applepot.co.uk/neolithic_pottery/index.htm

Orkney Archaeology Society Upcoming Events

Date	Talk and presenter	Venue
Tuesday 15th May 7.30pm	Mirella Arcidiacono Archaeology Films of Orkney, past & present	Pier Arts Centre, Stromness
Monday 28th May 8.00pm Free entry for this talk	The Buchan Lecture sponsored by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Regional Fund Jacqui Mulville, University of Cardiff 'Islands in A Common Sea: Archaeology of the Scillonian, Western and Northern Isles'	Orkney Arts Theatre, Kirkwall
4th – 9th June	OAS at the Blue Door – see article on page 2	
Thursday 14th June 7.30pm	AGM and Ness of Brodgar Update by Nick Card	Stenness Hall
Sunday 8th July	Trip to Flotta Trail, lunch in Community Hall Wartime archaeology – Gavin Lindsay	Book with Nan Plus book lunch
Sunday 5th August	Trip to Westray	Book with Nan Plus book lunch
Sunday 19th August	Members' visit to Ness of Brodgar	
Sunday 9th September	Trip to Graemsay	Book with Nan
Thursday 4th October 7.30pm	Bones from Ness of Brodgar Ingrid Mainland, zooarchaeologist	Orkney College, Kirkwall
Thursday 15th November	Talk by Julian Branscombe, on Scapa Flow Landscape Partnership	St Magnus Centre Hall, Kirkwall
Saturday 1st December	Christmas Event	

OAS website – www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/OAS

Usual admission prices for regular walks & talks are:

£2 for OAS members

£3 for non-members

Everyone is welcome at all our events. After talks, we usually have tea & coffee and a chance to chat. We look forward to seeing you soon.

All events will be advertised in local press and on the website – look out for further details.

We email details of events to those of you for whom we have email addresses. If you do not currently receive email notification of events and would like to, please email oas@orkneycommunities.co.uk and we will add you to the list.

There are also some other events coming up which may be of interest to OAS members which we have been told about.

Date	Talk, presenter, organiser	Venue
5th May – 29th September Monday – Saturday 10.30 – 5.00 Free admission	Exhibition: Ness of Brodgar: The Heart of Neolithic Orkney	The Orkney Museum, Kirkwall
Friday 25th May 7.30pm	Dr Peter Anderson “The Orkney Earls” This talk is part of the THING project lecture series.	Orkney College, Kirkwall
29th & 30th May	UHI Sustainability & Heritage conference This conference is being organised by Orkney College UHI – full details can be found either by contacting Anne Billing (01856 569340 afternoons only) or on the conference website: www.uhi.ac.uk/sustainabilityconference	Pickaquooy Centre, Kirkwall

If you have anything you would like us to put into the next Newsletter, or any comments, please contact:
 The Newsletter Editor, PO Box 6213, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1YD

Orkney Archaeology Society Publications Available

Mine Howe: Fieldwork and excavation 2000-2005

FOAT Occasional Publication 1, December 2005, compiled by Dr Stephen Harrison



This publication covers the investigation of Mine Howe from the original discovery in 1946 through the rediscovery in 1999 and the subsequent archaeological work, providing a comprehensive summary of the work so far. Also included is a dig diary from one of the participants and a further reading list.

Published by The Friends of Orkney Archaeological Trust, now called Orkney Archaeology Society.

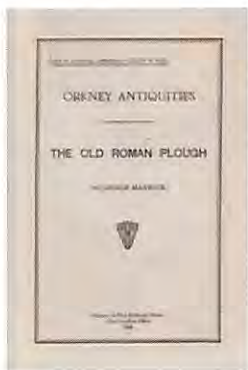
£5.95, postage free to Orkney Archaeology Society members, £1 for non-members

The Old Roman Plough

A facsimile reproduction of a lecture given by George Marwick in October 1903 on the traditional ploughs used in Orkney.

Published by Orkney Archaeological Trust.

£2.50, postage free to Orkney Archaeology Society members, £1 for non-members



Rising Tides: The Loss of Coastal Heritage Orkney



We are hoping to produce a reprint of Rising Tides during 2012.



Orkney Archaeology Society

Scottish Charities no: SC030611

The Buchan Lecture

sponsored by the

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Regional Fund

*“Islands in a Common Sea:
Archaeology of the Scillonian, Western and
Northern Isles”*

**A talk by Jacqui Mulville,
University of Cardiff**

**8pm on Monday 28th May 2012
At Orkney Arts Theatre, Kirkwall**

Free entry
All Welcome



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Orkney College



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Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean



Sustainability and Heritage:
How Can the Past
Contribute to a
Sustainable Future?

University of the Highlands & Islands
May 29th – 31st 2012
www.uhi.ac.uk/sustainabilityconference