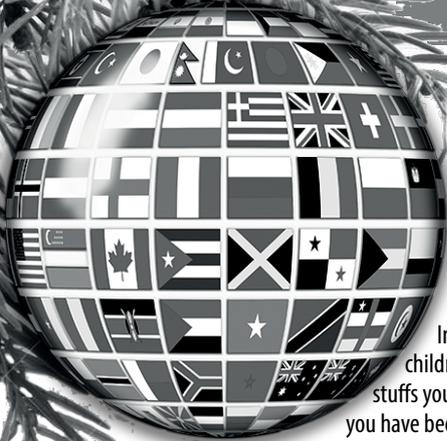




SIB FOLK NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE ORKNEY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY Issue No 76 December 2015

Curious Christmas Customs from around the world



GREAT BRITAIN

A British tradition is the plum pudding. Every member of the family helps make the pudding stirring clockwise and making a wish.



VENEZUELA

In Caracas on Christmas morning you will find hundreds of people roller skating to Mass.

Children tie a string to their toes before going to sleep and let it dangle out of the window.

Skaters on their way to church will pull the strings to waken the children who then enjoy the spectacle.



Austria

In Austria two demonic figures check up on childrens' behaviour. If you are bad Krampus stuffs you in a sack and carries you off to hell but if you have been really bad Perchta rips open your abdomen, extracts the guts and stuffs you with straw.



JAPAN

A food associated with Christmas in Japan is a sponge cake covered in cream, chocolate and strawberries. They are ordered months in advance and any left after the 25 December are unwanted. At one time Japanese girls over the age of 25 were called Christmas cakes. Shame!



CZECH REPUBLIC

Christmas in Czechia is supposedly a single lady's chance to foretell her matrimonial future by standing outside her front door and throwing her shoe over her left shoulder. If it lands with the toe pointing towards the front door she will be married before the year's end.



NORWAY

There is a superstition in Norway that advises households to hide their brooms on Dec 24th as witches and evil spirits rise from their graves on this date and use the brooms to fly through the sky and create chaos until dawn.



SOUTH AFRICA

On Christmas Day, southern Africans celebrate by tucking into a plate of plump fuzzy caterpillars of the emperor moth fried in oil.

Bon appetit!



MEXICO - OAXACA CITY

La Noche de Rábanos or radish night is the focal point for Christmas celebrations on December 23rd in the city of Oaxaca in Mexico. Here visitors will find ornate radish sculptures from small animals and human figures to representations of grand events including Nativity scenes.



FINLAND

In Finland, the Yule Cat is a vicious beast who lurks about the countryside at Christmas time and is said to eat people who have not received new clothes. The myth was perpetuated by farmers as an incentive to their workers to finish processing the autumn wool before Christmas. Those who did receive new clothes. Those who didn't were liable to be preyed upon by the Yule Cat.



GÄVLE SWEDEN

in 1966 Stig Gavlén came up with the idea of making a giant traditional Swedish Christmas goat of straw. On 2 December the 3 tonne goat stood on the square. At midnight on New Year's Eve, the goat went up in smoke. The perpetrator was charged with vandalism. The Goat has been burned down 25 times since then.



How does Santa get around?

On Christmas Eve Santa may ride around on a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer but he frequently switches modes of transportation. In Australia he uses Kangaroos, paddles a canoe in Hawaii rides a horse in Russia and the Netherlands and travels by donkey in Switzerland— to name just a few. How far does he travel? Experts reckon about 510,000,000km in 32 hours (allowing for different time zones) so he will be travelling at 18,000 miles a second. No wonder he needs the rest of the year off.



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FAMILY HISTORY
NEWSLETTER No 75**
December 2015
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*If your circumstances have
changed you do not have to tell us
as you can update them yourself.*

*Simply log on to our website
www.orkneyfhs.co.uk
and log in with your password.
Now click on MEMBERS PAGE.*

*When this opens click
MY DETAILS.*

*To change any of these click
EDIT DETAILS*

and make any changes.

Now click on

SAVE CHANGES

*and in the box that appears
click OK and you are done.*



From the Chair

How is your Christmas shopping coming along?

Stuck for a present for someone who has everything? What about a gift membership for the Orkney Family History Society? It would make a very acceptable and unusual present for someone with Orcadian roots and it won't break the bank either—page 22 of this newsletter will tell you more about it.

We are so grateful to everyone who gives up their time to come along and speak at our open meetings. Kenneth Thomson entertained us in September with an interesting mix of his old and not so old Orkney films while in October we sat enthralled as Pat Long read extracts from the World War 1 diary of her grandfather's first cousin—William Leask.

While on the subject of WW1 you might find a visit to the first floor of the library interesting. The archivists have put together an exhibition documenting this period of history as it happened 100 years ago. It's a rolling exhibit so it changes every so often as time goes on.

If you have any family stories from the first world war we would be very interested to hear them and our Editor would be very happy to include them in our next Sib Folk News.

Finally, on behalf of the committee and our hard-working volunteers may I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Anne Rendall



My Uncle William was delighted to be delivered to Redland by 'parcel post'.

(Marlene Langley (nee Peace) Member number 1265)

My paternal grandfather, **David Peace** (1878-1940), was born in Kirkwall but spent his early years in Firth before moving to Tyneside sometime in the 1880's to live with his uncle, **William Bain Peace** (1844-1906). William had been brought up at Quoys of Ayre (Shoreside) in Firth but spent many years at sea before marrying in 1874 and settling down to run a public house in Willington Quay on the banks of the Tyne. According to the family story, William had worked at Redland Farm in Firth as a plough boy and always nursed the ambition to own it one day. When the opportunity arose in 1901, therefore, he purchased it and on his death in 1906 it passed to his daughter, **Elizabeth Alice Peace** (1878-1963). She was known in the family as Aunt Lily Harrison, she having married **Thomas Harrison** in 1902. William's younger brother **James Peace** (1853-1924) took over the tenancy of Redland circa 1906 and when he retired to Thickbigging House in Finstown in 1916, the tenancy was taken up by my grandfather's eldest sister, **Hughina Ann Muir Peace** (1871-1954), known as Anna, who had married **John Scott** in 1900.

My grandfather stayed in Tyneside and married in 1905, thereafter producing nine children, one of whom died in infancy. The eighth child was my father, also David Peace (1917-1985) and I recall him telling me how he and his siblings would travel from Tyneside up to Orkney for a holiday at Redland; this would have been just after the First World War and into the early 1920's. My father was known at Redland as "**Peedie Davy**" and is remembered for drinking the horses' medicine on one occasion!

In July 2015 my first cousin, **John Peace** (born 1945), came up to Orkney to stay with us for a few days. His father, **William Stanley Peace** (1909-1973), was an elder brother of my father and suffered from health issues for most of his life. John remembers his father recounting the story of how, as a very young boy, he was sent up to Orkney on his own to recuperate after an illness. He was taken from Tyneside to the boat (presumably at Leith in those days) with a large destination label around his neck. On arrival in Orkney, he was collected



My grandfather, David Peace, and his family taken in 1919 or early 1920. Grandfather is holding my father, David still and Uncle William (of parcel post fame) is in the middle of the back row.

by the postman, placed on the back of his horse and duly delivered to Redland! John had never visited Orkney before and was delighted to be able to go to Redland and place his hands on the same stones that his father probably touched roughly 100 years before. ■



Marlene, the author of the article, and John Peace 'snapped' outside Redland in July 2015.



By Robert Craigie Marwick

Nicol Mainland was the son of **James Mainland** and **Christian Louttit** of Cotafea and he was born on June 9th 1800. In 1830 he married **Margaret Louttit**, daughter of **William Louttit** and **Isabella Craigie** of Faraclett. She was the twin of **Janet** and they were born on January 19th 1803. Between 1831 and 1846 Nicol and Margaret raised a family of seven children.

The following tale of an incident involving Nicol, which occurred on the island of Rousay many years ago, was written by Robert Craigie Marwick.

It was close and airless in the box bed and old Nicol could not get over to sleep. From time to time, Maggie nudged him and muttered sleepily about lying still. He knew it was not just the warmth of the night that was keeping him awake; he could not stop thinking about the events of the day that was now dying in the western sky.

The day had started uneventfully enough. While his son had gone off to the hill for another load of peats, Nicol busied himself building up the stack with the last load brought home the previous day. It was a warm, sunny day, warm enough for him to shed his heavy jacket. The sun felt good on his old bones as he piled up the peats. In the afternoon he harnessed the old mare and yoked her to the scuffler. It was a good day for dealing with the weeds in the neep field down by the shore. The old mare's slow and steady pace would suit him fine on such a warm day.

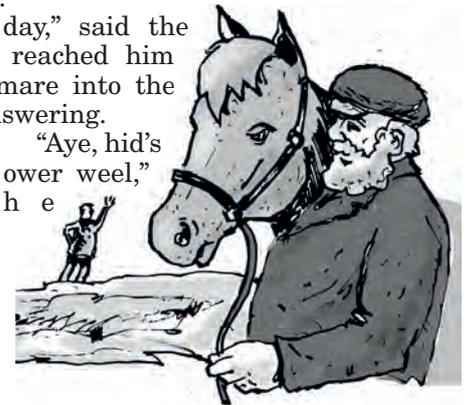
He had taken no more than two or three wups with the scuffler when he spotted the stranger coming along the shore. By the time Nicol turned to-

wards the shore again, the man was standing on the end rig waiting for him.

"It's a grand day," said the stranger as Nicol reached him Nicol turned the mare into the next drill before answering.

"Aye, hid's ower weel,"

h e



replied, at the same time pulling his pipe and a stump of black twist from his pocket.

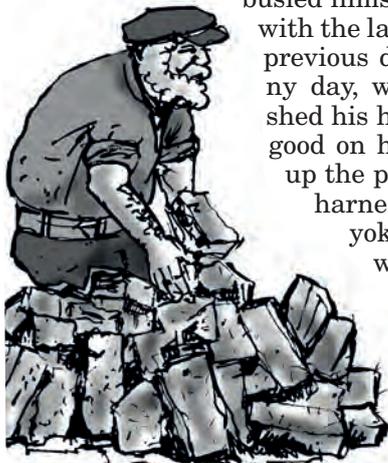
"Here, have some of mine," insisted the stranger, offering Nicol a full pouch. The old man declined politely and began searching for his knife with which to cut up his small bit of twist.

"I see you haven't much left so try a fill of mine. It's good stuff. I'm sure you'll like it." He again held out the pouch. Nicol took his first good look at the stranger. His shiny skipped cap, his clean-cut appearance, and clear, blue eyes showed him to be a man of the sea. Nicol liked the look of him.

"Hid's guid o' thee," said the old man. "Mibbe

I'll hae a fill right enoff," and took the pouch. When his pipe was filled and going well, Nicol nodded appreciatively to the stranger and turned again to his work. He would have liked to know who the stranger was but considered it would be an impertinence to ask straight out. The man would tell him in his own good time, he reckoned.

As Nicol prepared to set off up the drill, the stranger asked if he might walk with him for a little while. "Fine that," replied the old man. Up and down, up and down the drills they trudged, with the stranger saying ▶



Very little apart from an occasional remark on how well the crops were looking and a question on whether Nicol had anyone to help him with the work on the farm. After a couple of hours the stranger said he would need to be on his way and held out his hand. "I'm glad to have met you," he said as he grasped Nicol's hand firmly in both of his.

"Hid's been lightsome right enoff," Nicol was surprised to find himself saying, being well aware that very few words had passed between them as they walked up and down behind the scuffler. Still, he had enjoyed the younger man's quiet company.

"Take care of yourself," said the stranger. Then he smiled and turned towards the shore. The old man, with a puzzled expression, watched him go. Just a friendly smile, he told himself, and yet.....A hundred yards away the stranger turned and waved. Nicol raised his hand, and then, turning to the task in hand, clicked his tongue and the old mare moved off.

That evening after tea, Nicol took his stick and set off on the short walk across the fields for his usual mid-week visit to the shop at Hullion. His neighbour, Jeems o' News, who ferried mail and passengers across Evie Sound each day, was already there chatting to the shop-keeper. The latter, when he saw old Nicol coming in, reached beneath the counter.

"I daresay this is whit thoo're efter," he said as he handed Nicol an ounce of black twist. Nicol paid for the tobacco and proceeded to fill his pipe.

"Thoo wid be pleased tae see thee viseitor the day, Nicol," remarked Jeems. "I saa him gaan ap and doon the neep field wae thee a long while this efterneun." Nicol made no reply until his pipe was going well.

"Hid wis ower weel, bit best kens wha hid wis."

"Did thoo no ken wha hid wis?" asked Jeems in surprise, and when he saw the blank look on his old friend's face he realised he would have to explain matters carefully.

"I took thee viseitor ower fae Evie and I kent wha hid wis when he asked me whar thoo lived. He's the spittan image o' his uncle, Jock Harrold, that I worked wae for a term in Egilsay afore he set aff for Australia."

"Harrold, did thoo say? Wis that.....wis that Isabel's boy? Wis that wha hid wis?" asked Nicol, incredulously.

"Aye, Nicol, that's wha hid wis. Isabel Harrold's boy. Thee son, Jeemie."

"Jeemie", thought Nicol. The bairn Isabel Harrold had borne him. It must be fifty year, aye, maybe one or two more. Isabel Harrold. My, what a bonny lass she had been with that head of red hair and that smile of hers. The very same smile, he now realised, as he had seen that afternoon.

In response to Nicol's urgent questioning, Jeems

o' News had told him about taking

Jeemie back to Evie

in the late afternoon

and when last

seen he had

been making

for Aikerness. It took a little persuasion for Jeems to agree to cross the Sound with Nicol that evening in the faint hope of catching up on Jeemie before he got too far. At Aikerness they were told he had set off for Kirkwall right away on the hired bike on which he had arrived, saying he planned to catch the six o'clock steamer for Leith. Wearily they trudged back to the shore and, without a word being spoken, set sail for home.

Now, in the silence of the night, Nicol's thoughts took him back fifty years to that time when

he had fee'd at Faraclett and had first

met Isabel Harrold. She had lived with her mother on the little croft of Peeno up by the Suso Burn.

Fondly, he recalled the joys of that summer and the sweet sorrow of parting when he left in the spring for a season at the whaling in the Davis Straits. It was only when he returned that he heard about the bairn born during his absence, and the death of Isabel's mother shortly afterwards. He had listened, with

ever increasing anger, to an account of Isabel being summoned to appear before the kirk session to be given a tongue lashing by the minister. An elder who had been present had

later told Nicol it was the most vicious he had ever heard. Isabel had

not been there to tell him anything of these events for she and the bairn had left the island after her searing kirk session ordeal, and before his return. Gone to Leith, some claimed, where she was said to have relatives. She had never returned to the island, but must have told the boy about his parentage and he had returned. Nicol smiled contentedly in the dark.

After another session at the whaling, Nicol had fee'd again at Faraclett, and a year later had married Maggie, a daughter of the house. She had been a good wife to him all these years, and he had no regrets, he told himself.

As the dawn of a new day dispelled the long darkness of the night, Nicol drifted over into a blissful sleep and into a dream in which a younger self frolicked with a smiling, red-headed lass on the summer banks of the Suso burn. ■





By Lars Maersk Hansen, Member No 3390

Merchants from Walls in Orkney to Bergen, Norway. Part 2

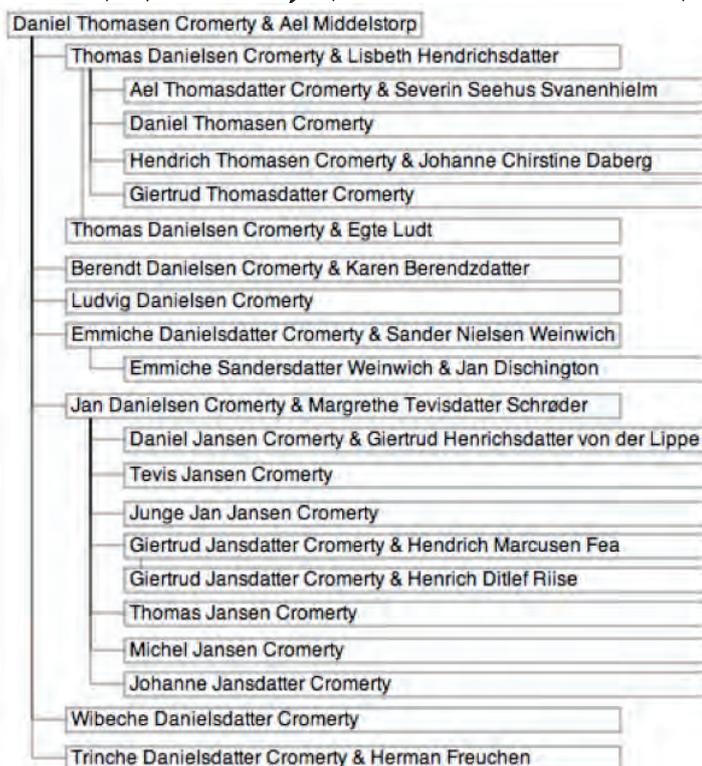


Figure 1. Descendant chart of Daniel Cromerty in Bergen.

introduction

Do you enjoy tawny port? If so, you may have tasted Krohn's colheita (tawny vintage) ports. In this article, I shall deal with the connection between the Cromarty family and the Krohn port shippers. In the SFN June issue, we ended up with **Daniel Cromerty** in Bergen, Norway, grandson of **Thomas Cromerty** from Walls, Orkney, who became a Bergen burgher in 1572. This article deals mainly with his oldest son **Thomas** and Thomas' daughter **Ael**, after 1700 usually called Alida, and their siblings and offspring.

Thomas Danielsen Cromerty

Thomas became burgher in Bergen on Oct 2nd 1671. Nothing is said in the burgher book about his profession, but in a parish record, dated 1672, he is styled "sailmaker"

and in his probate record (Register protocol 1699, No 5. fol. 331-364. SAB), many fathoms of sailcloth and rope are mentioned, and his son **Hendrich** also became a sailmaker in 1703. His year of birth is unknown, but cannot be later than 1651, possibly in the 1640s.

Figure 1 shows a chart showing Thomas with closest family: parents and siblings, as well as his children, nephews and nieces. Four of his siblings had no offspring. His oldest sister **Emmiche** died giving birth to her daughter, also named Emmiche. She married Jan Dischington and they had surviving grandchildren in the 1700s, and possibly descendants still exist. Thomas' younger brother **Jan** had many children, but their Bergen branches vanished. His daughter **Giertrud**'s probate record mentions that a daughter lived with her father in Bremen, Germany. Neither this nor the Dischington branch have been further investigated.

Merchant and ship-owner

In the 1600s, Bergen was the most important harbour in Scandinavia, stock-fish being the bulk export and basis for the Hanseatic half of the harbour. During late 1500s-early 1600s, the German Hanseatic merchants integrated with people mainly of Frisian, Dutch, Danish, Shetland, Orkney and Scottish origin, all involved in trade. From Thomas' substantial probate record from 1699 we can understand that he was a wealthy man, owning books, many artists' paintings (Evjenth 1995) and several warehouses filled with all kinds of goods, besides sailcloth and rope. Barrels of Bordeaux and Port wines were a substantial part of the goods, but also cloth, Scottish cloth (tartan?) and clothing such as ladies' gloves was found. Everything was recorded in the probate register, "Swedish nails" and even "rusty Swedish nails", but also gold, copper, brass, pewter and silver objects.

Thomas was, jointly with some 60-80 other merchants, shareholder of 18 ships, including 5 armed merchantmen, also called frigates, with up to 36 guns. The latter could be used by the Dano-Norwegian King's forces in wartime and were therefore tax and duty free. Off Portugal and in the Mediterranean, they were useful against Pirates. In 1672 the captains **Frans Ross** and **Peter Midzell**

(both probably of Scottish origin) had to take battle with one of them, forcing the pirate to flee. A copper engraving of the incident is shown in figure 2.

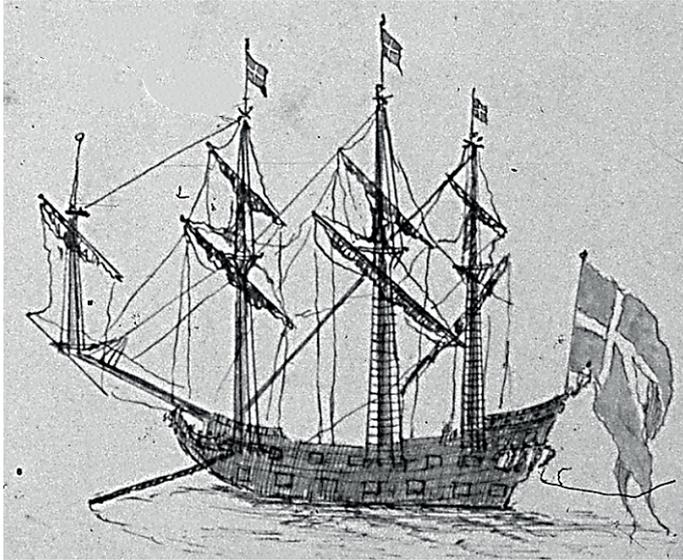


Figure 2. (a) Armed merchantman "Elisabeth". Thomas Cromerty was a shareholder in this ship.

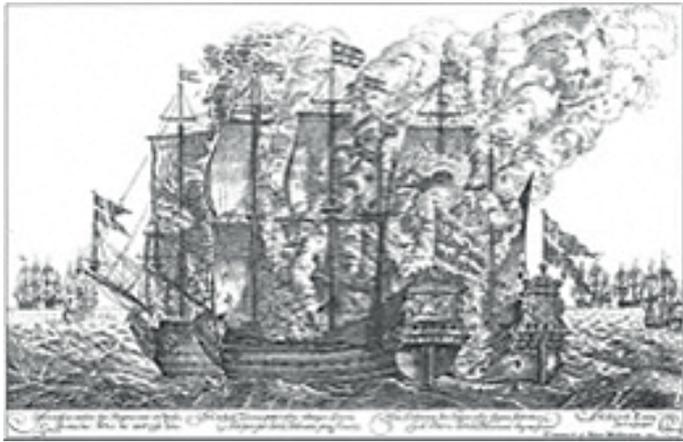


Figure 2 (b) Two frigates from Bergen in battle with an Algerian pirate off the coast of Portugal in 1672. Master of one of the ships was Frans Ross, of Scottish origin. (Lorentzen 1959, p215).

landed estate

Figure 3 shows a map of Bergen, dated 1682, showing the fortifications for protection of the harbour, the need for which had been demonstrated during the Battle of Bergen in 1665 between the Dutch East Indian fleet and an English fleet commanded by the Earl of Sandwich. The English were forced to withdraw with great losses, as the Bergen garrisons took party for the Dutch. Thomas may have taken part, as he was a member of the home-defence, and we know from the probate record that he owned a sword and several guns. The arrows point to locations where the Cromerties of Bergen owned landed estate. The warehouses in Sandviken were equipped with furnished flats on the upper floor, which could be used for holidays and parties, usually with a lot of wine and booze.

In 1686, an area covering almost all of the Nykirken

parish suffered a great fire, which ruined many houses, including Thomas Cromerty's residence. Figure 4 is a contemporary perspective plan of a part of the ruined area, and a reconstruction of the houses is shown in figure 5.

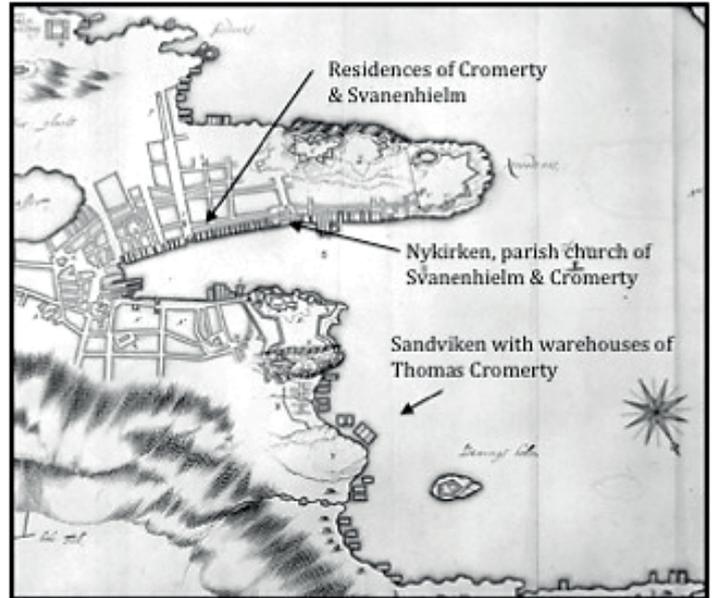


Figure 3. Map of Bergen ca 1682 with fortifications (Frederik V's Atlas. DRA). Nykirken Parish, in which Thomas Cromarty resided, consists of the peninsula to the South-west of Bergen Harbour. The street plan is essentially the same as today.

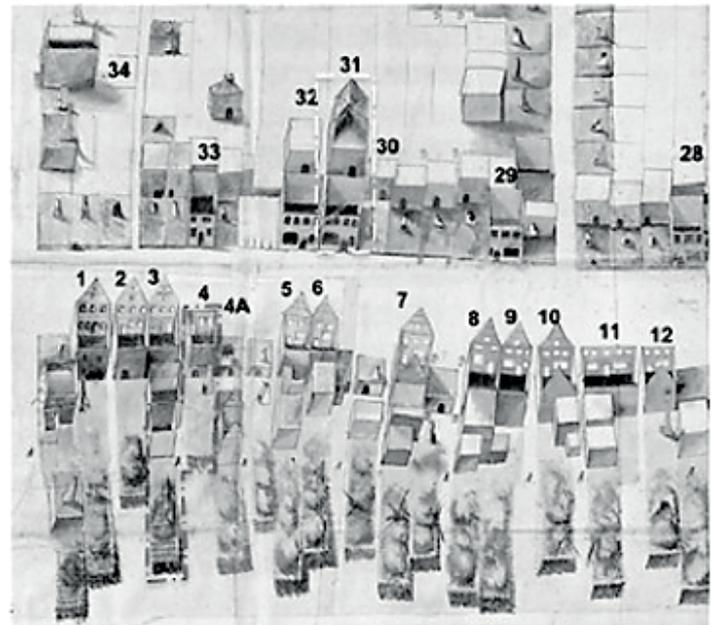


Figure 4. Part of a perspective map of Strandgaten drawn after the great fire in 1686 (NRA). The map shows the down-burnt warehouses along the harbourside in the front. Behind them there are bricked warehouses, downburnt wooden houses and remaining bricked houses. Property No. 4, with appurtenant bricked and wooden warehouses, belonged to the Cromarties from 1632 to 1727. No 31 belonged in 1690-1740 to Thomas Cromarty's daughter Alida and her spouse, and No 29 belonged to another Orkney family, the Dischingtons. ▶



Figure 5. Reconstruction of the area where the Cromerties resided, based on the map in figure 5. Thommøhlen, the wealthiest man in Bergen at this time, owned the three large white houses (Nos 1-3 in Figure 5) in the South-east end of Strandgaten next to Cromerty. The building in the front was constructed in the 16th century and still exists. In the far left, the parish church, Nykirken can be seen, and to the right some warehouses with easy access for ships (Fossen 1978).

Family

Thomas married twice, but had only children with his first wife **Lisbeth Hendrichsdatter**, whom he married in 1671 in the Bergen Cathedral, which must be her parents' parish. The parish record of his marriage is the only record with both his patronymic and his surname Cromerty, in all other records he is styled **Thomas Danielsen**. As Lisbeth's family name is not recorded, we cannot for sure tell which Hendrich was her father, but considering Thomas' social position, there are two strong candidates from the property tax rolls of 1645 with more valuable houses in the Cathedral parish: **Hendrich Korens** and **Hendrich Ludt**. If the latter is the case, Thomas' two wives might have been cousins or even sisters (Ludt was the surname of his second wife).

Thomas and Lisbeth had four children Ael (Alida), Daniel, Hendrich and Giertrud. Only Alida and Hendrich had children, but Hendrichs line died out with his son **Hans** in 1787, the last male Cromerty in Bergen.

alida cromerty

Alida married **Severin Seehus** in 1691 and they bought a house across the street (figure 4). Severin was in 1712 appointed treasurer for a large part of Norway and was nobilised Svanenhielm in 1720, which was the beginning of his decline and bankruptcy in 1724. He died in 1726, and in 1740 his house and lands were sold by auction. His widow Alida, was probably provided for by her relatives until her death in 1749, aged 76.

In a letter she claimed that her father, Thomas Cro-

merty, was asked by certain gentlemen from Scotland to claim the estate of Cromarty. If correct, this might have happened in 1686, when **George MacKenzie** bought that estate. Probably, Thomas did not wish to get involved in the mess. In any case, he blamed illness and lack of family papers, according to the letter. In my opinion he had good reason to be pleased with his situation as a wealthy merchant in Bergen.

Figure 6 shows a descendant chart of Thomas' Daughter Alida. One lineage is descended from Alida's only son **Morten** and his son **Jonas** who served as a merchant of the Danish Royal Greenland Trade in Christianshaab (Qasigiannugit) in Greenland for 30 years, and married an inuit woman, **Birgithe** (Ostermann 1940). Their offspring through their daughters, **Cecilie** and **Charlotte**, form a number of branches still alive, including the author of this article, whose great grandparents were **Maria Hveysell** and **Svend Maersk**.

One of Alida's daughters, also named **Alida**, gave rise to **Kristoffer Krohn**, whose son, **Danckert Krohn**, was co-founder of the house of Krohn, which produces the famous and multi awarded Colheita tawny ports. So when you enjoy one of Krohn ports (they have ruby and vintage as well), you can consider that their origin can be traced back in time to Thomas Cromerty who left Walls, Orkney and became a burges of Bergen in 1572. Colheita 1960 is excellent, but expensive, so I recommend Colheita 1998 (2003 or 2004 will also do) for a toast: "Here's to Thomas Cromerty from Walls!"

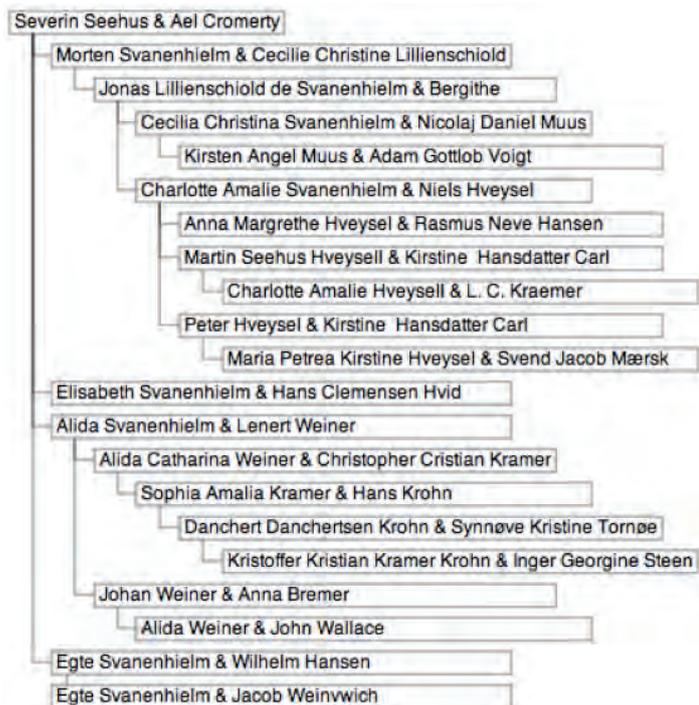


Figure 6 Descendant chart of Alidsa Cromerty

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Copenhagen
- NRA Riksarkivet,
Oslo



They are probably from Burray but who could they be?



Elizabeth Munro, Member No 3358 from Caithness, is keen to know their identity.

Elizabeth's grandmother was **Betsy Laird** from Burray and she was married to **George Rosie**. Before Betsy left Orkney in 1902 she lived at TILLYDELPH

Elizabeth is fairly sure that the people in the photograph were Betsy's neighbours in Burray and she would like to know something about them or their descendants. If you can help Elizabeth would be delighted to hear from you.

You can email her at: amanda.munro1@hotmail.co.uk



Maybe Anne still cannot sing but she did find a brand new cousin



The sequel to Anne Cormacks article on the family connection with the composer Edvard Grieg

In our September issue, Anne wrote about the Greigs and the Griegs and the possibility that her grandfather **James Greig** and the composer were related. If so she asked, tongue in cheek, "Why can't I sing?"

After the article first appeared something wonderful happened. She woke up one morning and found that she could sing like Maria Callas. No, not as wonderful as that but pretty wonderful nevertheless.

While she did not solve the connection with Grieg she did find a distant relative of her own.

In her article Anne mentioned her great grandfather **Robert Nicolson Greig** of Kirkwall. She knew that among Robert's siblings there was an older brother **John**, born in 1822, but had no record of him marrying, or having a family or even the date of his death. He was just a name on the family tree.

sive knowledge about John which is far more than Anne has about her great-grandfather **Robert**.

Lynn could tell Anne that John had been hired by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1844 and had worked as a labourer in Fort Colville till 1851.

It was at Fort Colville that he met and married **Margaret Gaudie**, the daughter of **James** and **Catherine Gaudie**. James, as his surname implies was also an Orcadian, and his wife **Catherine** was from the Schwayips tribe. Margaret was their first child and was born about 1830.

In 1853-54 **John Greig** and his half Indian and half Orcadian wife were settled in Victoria B.C., where he started a lime producing operation, extracting lime from limestone rock. He found such rock in the Esquimalt district of Columbia around Thetis Lake and sold the lime to the Hudson's Bay Company.

As the lime in this area was not of satisfactory quality he scouted around and found better deposits in the Tod Inlet area north of Victoria on land that is now the world-famous Butchart Gardens. The family moved to this location in 1870 and worked the lime deposits for many years.

On the social side, John was known to be a good fiddler and was apparently in great demand at dance functions.

John certainly obeyed the edict 'go forth and multiply'. He and Margaret had a family of twelve children and there are numerous descendants of whom Lynn Piaggio is one.

John died in Saanich, Vancouver Island in 1892. His wife survived him and died in Victoria in 1914.

Anne found it particularly interesting to note that John's father-in-law, **James**, was a Goudie (Gaudie), since John and Robert Nicolson Greigs mother was also a Gaudie – Amelia Gaudie who married Francis Greig, my great-great-grandfather. Whether **James Gaudie** and **Amelia Gaudie** were themselves related in any way is not known.

Maybe Anne did not find her singing voice but she did find a third cousin once removed and thanks to Sib Folk News filled in a few more blanks on the family tree.

I hope that other members are inspired by Anne's experience and are encouraged to share their family trees and stories in our newsletter.

Often the simplest of stories can produce a deluge of information. ■



Lynn Piaggio

Now this was about to change. Within a short time of the article appearing the postman arrived with a letter from another OFHS member **Lynn Piaggio** in Delta, British Columbia who just happened to be a great-great-grandson of the mysterious John. Lynn shared his exten-



Can you put Colin in the picture?

Subject: Liddell portrait
By: colin traill (#3137)

I am a Traill of Frotoft and my four greats grandfather William Traill married Elspeth Liddell in 1733. I have William's portrait, painted and inscribed at the time of his marriage and it is very likely that somewhere there exists a portrait of Elspeth, painted at the same time as was the custom. There is some evidence that my portrait was at one time in the possession of the Watt family, so this could provide a clue.

If anyone has any knowledge of Elspeth's portrait I would be very grateful to learn about it

You can contact me at
colin@caco.waitrose.com

Maureen is still seeking Scollay/Rendall links

Subject: scollay/rendall links
By: maureen flack (#2896)
Date: 28/03/15 17:04:04

It seems my great grandmother was Jean Scollay born 1865. One of her sisters was Margaret Scollay born 1873 and died in 1956. She had a son by her second husband John Foulis, also John Foulis, born in 1899. Her daughter by her first marriage to John Rendall was my grandmother Tomima Jane born 1886. If anyone has any links to any of these characters or is remotely related to him/her I'd love to know, please.

You can contact Maureen at
ianandmaureen.flack@btinternet.com

Looking for copy of Westray Roots

Subject: George Pottinger
By: Bob Testa (#3323)
Date: 11/03/15 18:42:35

Is anyone able to supply me with a copy of the piece on George Pottinger published in WESTRAY ROOTS newsletter, Issue 25, October 1995? Thanks.

You can contact Bob at
bobtesta@sbcglobal.net

Where did Jane Swan Foulis go after 1851?

Subject: Jane Swan Foulis
By: Liz Foulis (#3440)
Date: 05/02/15 22:28:19

Trying to trace Jane Swan Foulis b c1820 in Papa Westray. I have found her in the 1841 census at Holland farm as a farm servant along with her sister Christina and in 1851 in Papa Westray with her parents Oliver Foulis & Ann Reid. Can't find her after that. So far have not found a marriage or death for her, Would also like to find her brother William b 1812 Papa Westray and any help much appreciated.

You can email Liz at
tiffs2884@gmail.com

Was Jane Gutcher connected to the Gutchers of Gunnerhill Farm?

Subject: Gutchers
By: Jackie Higginson (#3108)
Date: 22/04/15

I wonder if anyone can help me. My 3x G Grandmother was Jane Gutcher who married James Budge in 1816. She died at Thurrigair Farm in 1867. What I would like to know is if there is a link between this family and the Gutchers from Gunnerhill Farm.

Any help would be appreciated. Jackie
You can reach Jackie at
jackie.higg@hotmail.co.uk

Looking for Thomas Danvers Johnston

Subject: Thomas Johnston
By: Eunice & Tony Johnston (#3330)
Date: 07/08/14

Looking for information on a THOMAS DANVERS JOHNSTON, great-grandfather. The only information we have is that he was born or lived in Calderwood, Stromness, Orkney, Scotland, born around 11.8.1838. Arrived in Australia on the ship called ALFRED in 1857. He married ANNE MARIE ROBERTS in RYLSTONE NSW AUSTRALIA 1861, Anne - born 1841 - died 1925.

Thomas died in SYDNEY AUSTRALIA 24.7.1892.
Regards Eunice & Tony Johnston
eunicejohnston7@gmail.com

Every picture tells a story – I hope!

Can you spot a well-kent face here? If so tell us more about it and the occasion of the photograph.

These pictures have been selected from the files of unidentified photographs held in the Photo Archives department of the Orkney Library.

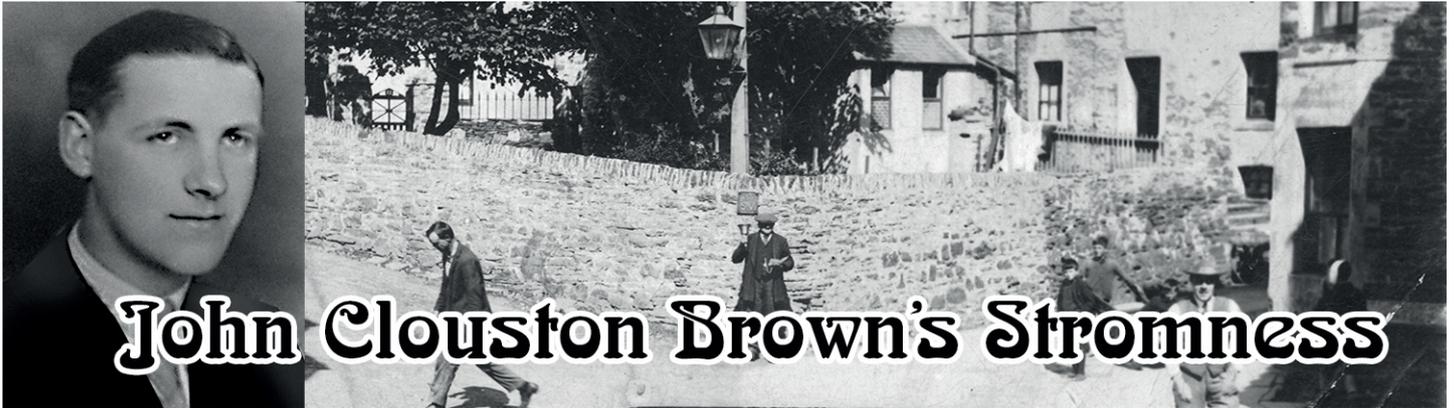
It would be a great pity if the names were lost to future generations so any information that you can provide will be greatly appreciated.

Identify the photo by the reference number and any individuals you might know from their position in the photo from left to right and the row that they appear in.

You can send the results to me at johnsin@gotadsl.co.uk and if you have a story to go with it so much the better. Ed.



Top Left: No Information.
 Second from top: Simply marked 'Shapinsay'.
 Bottom Left: Caption reads: 'A group of men at the Wasbister School, Rousay, 1935'.
 Middle: No information on the young lasses.
 Top Right: No information.
 Bottom Right: Caption reads 'When school is over, Birsay'. Why the sticks?



John Clouston Brown's Stromness

By the late John Clouston Brown (Jackie)

I was born in Stromness, a small town in the Orkney Islands, on the 4th of October 1914, two months after the beginning of the First World War on 4th August, one of family of six – a girl and five boys. My father, **John Brown**, was a postman and tailor and my mother, **Mary**

Jane Mackay, was born at Strathly Point in Sutherlandshire. She was a Gaelic speaker who, with her sister Alice, came to work as a waitress in the Stromness Hotel at the age of sixteen. The reason why she and her sister had ventured across the treacherous Pentland Firth was that her cousin, **John Mackay**, the owner of the Stromness Hotel, had invited



The Stromness Hotel
Still a popular venue

them across to work for him. At the age of nineteen she had met and married my father, who, although he looked quite a young man was, unknown to her, thirty-five years old. She never discovered his age until many years later. My mother was a beautiful woman, tall with a wealth of dark brown curly hair always smiling and possessed of a hearty laugh. My father on the other hand was a small man of five feet six inches or so with a quick wit, full of humour and a wonderful story teller. So our childhood, although we were poor and could be described as lower middle class, was a happy one. My father had three wages. Apart from being a postman he was a part-time tailor and also found time to collect the town's laundry for the Glaitness Laundry Company in Kirkwall, and deliver it the following week. It was collected and delivered in a barrow with a large wicker basket and I can readily remember as a very small boy, and to my great delight, getting a ride in the wicker basket when empty. Our house

stood on the corner of Victoria Street and Clouston's Pier, right in the centre of the town. Across from it stood a large three storey building, the Commercial Hotel, and at the back of the house, on the street, stood the Mason Arms Hotel. Thirty yards along the street, up the steep

Church Road, stood three churches, the Free Kirk, the Old Kirk and the Episcopalian Kirk. A fourth church, the U.P. Kirk, stood about 100 yards further along the street. This was the church that my family attended each and every Sunday – the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, to give it its full title. These churches were well attended when I was a boy, 70 or more years ago, and we were drilled along every Sunday to the morning service and again to Sunday School in the afternoon. The family pew was situated on the highest seat in the balcony, looking down on the pulpit. My father was a strong singer and would bawl out the psalms and hymns, much to our consternation, and with one foot on the pew. To achieve this, instead of facing the pulpit, he faced it at an

*John Clouston Brown was the elder brother of **George Mackay Brown**. He worked in the Union Bank Stromness as a young man, subsequently moving to their Kirkwall Branch. In 1940 he married **Maria Sinclair Flett** and was soon off to serve his country in India and Burma. After the war he returned to the bank in Kirkwall before being transferred to their branch in Aberdeen. By 1954 he was back again in Stromness to take up the post of manager, a position he held till his retirement in 1974. His retirement was spent in Birsay where he indulged himself in his favourite sport of fishing but still found time to serve as the local councillor. He died in 2005 in his 91st year.*

angle, but as our seat was up in its eyrie I suppose no one noticed this peculiarity. The sermon was always a lengthy affair, only alleviated when the bag of pandrops was produced. The Sunday School was tolerated during the winter months but when the summer arrived and the sun shone we would absent ourselves; my brothers and I and slip along to the glories of the West Shore, spending our penny collection on the way. Apart from the established churches, there were other places of worship. There was the Plymouth Brethren, housed ▶



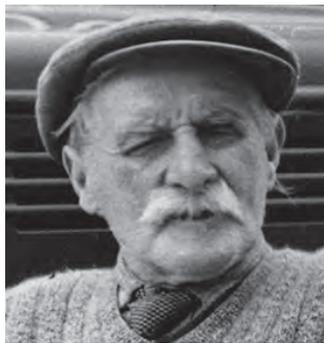
The Apostolic Church, Stromness

◀in the “Tin Tabernacle” as we called it, across from Wishart’s Garage, and on the Back Road, now a dwelling house, stood the Apostolic Church; and, of course, there was the Salvation Army, who occupied the Temperance Hall at the foot of Hellihole Road. That was where **Peter Brown**, my father’s eldest brother, began preaching before becoming a minister in the Congregational Church in Garleston, Ayrshire. Seventy years ago the mile long street, in contrast to the present, was devoid of traffic. **John Mackay** of the Stromness Hotel owned the first car and **Mr Bain** of



This bus will still be a familiar sight to many Orkney members. It is from the Orkney Image Library and the contributor was Bruce Benson

the Mason Arms Hotel had two cars for hire, while Bob Nicholson ran a daily bus from Stromness to Kirkwall, and the witty and incorrigible **Danny Watt** delivered heavy goods and parcels in his horse drawn lorry. So the street and the closes and the piers belonged to the children of the town. Here we played our football and here the boys and girls would indulge in boisterous games: “Leave-O” was the favourite. The girls would scamper away up the many lanes and closes, with one hand inside their jumper sleeves. When captured, the boys would struggle to free the hand, which of course meant physical contact. This was the greatest game of all and usually it was the girls who would make the first suggestion. The piers, twenty or so, were not very far from the street; they were places of enchantment. Here the many fishermen, line fishermen in their twenty foot motorised yawls, would be preparing for sea and baiting their long lines. Here we could borrow their dinghies or flatties to row into the harbour or cross over to the two small islands, the Inner and Outer Holms, across the bay. Here on a summer day we could swim or spend hours catching sillocks. Looking back, it seemed idyllic. The house where I was born was described by my younger brother, poet and author, George, as “on the hinge of Victoria Street and Clouston’s Pier”. The house down the pier, next to ours, was occupied by an old retired fisherman and his wife May. He was known as “Pinny” **Clouston**, possibly because he was lame and walked with a stick. Further down lived my namesake **Helen (Nella) Clouston** and her old mother. Nella made a fuss of me as a child and wanted me to be called Clouston Brown, but here a compromise was made and Clouston became my middle name. Nella was a big strong woman, a rather demanding woman, whose moods would vary



Danny Watt—A Stromness legend

with the advent of the full moon. Eventually she ended up in Morningside, an asylum in Edinburgh, where she spent the rest of her days. This would not now be tolerated. Many years later I visited her there. She looked no different to when I first knew her. I got a great reception with arms around me. “How wonderful - my godson, my godson”. I discovered then that she was allowed out to visit friends in Edinburgh. What I did know about the sad story was that Nella was about to be married to an English sailor in World War I and had her bridal outfit ready when she was informed by the Naval Command that he was a married man. After that everything changed for her. When my older sister Ruby had quarrelled with me, which was quite often, she would shout “Do you know that you take your personality from the person you are called after”. She thought she had floored me and the battle had been won. However, I loved Nella and her old mother and a lot of my time as a very young boy, before I went to school, was spent in their house. I think part of the attraction was an illustrated Pear’s Encyclopaedia there and a wooden fender beside the fire where I could spend hours in the warmth, with Nella’s mother singing quietly in a soft melodic voice “like a ship without a rudder in a dark and stormy sea.” Down our pier two fishermen operated, deaf **Tammack Clouston**, a son of “Pinny” Clouston, and **Bill Sinclair**, known locally as “Bill come lately” and his son Bill, known as “Young Billcome”. And today his grandson is also known as “Billcome”. I have heard the story as to how the name



Old Billcome



Young Billcome

originated but cannot now recall. So the pier was a wonderful place. The fishermen had a dinghy and a flattie which were used to row out to the fishing boats moored out in the harbour. My friends and I would ask for a loan of the small boats when they went out to fish, away beyond the Old Man of Hoy or the Black Craig, and we were seldom refused. We made sure we came back before them, when they would gut their fish – cod haddock and ling – load them on to a barrow and sell them in the street. There were two episodes in my young life I can recall very vividly. I had been in bed with tonsillitis and my first day out was a beautiful day. The sun was brilliant, and unknown to my mother, I wandered down the pier. The sea was flat calm and “Deaf Tammack” and his father “Pinny” were preparing to go to the island of Graemsay for limpets for the longlines. I did not ▶

◀hesitate when they asked me if I would like to come. Who could refuse the chance of such an adventure? But the aftermath was a disaster as I must have still been running a temperature. I can recall most vividly lying in bed and not being able to move for almost a fortnight.

The second episode was of a different nature altogether. It occurred on midsummer day, 21st June, 1919. The war was over and the German Fleet, 74 ships, were lying interned in Scapa Flow. My sister Ruby had been part of a school outing to visit the German ships and their vessel The Flying Kestrel, a water tender, was in the centre of the action when, at 11am, the German ensigns were hoisted and the ships began to keel over and sink. The Flying Kestrel was ordered to return but the captain decided to carry on and reach a British vessel. I was still only four, and can recall the townsfolk hurrying down our pier. The cries went up "the German Fleet is sinking". I



was hoisted up on a shoulder and we stood in amazement as, in slow motion, one by one, those battleships, cruisers and destroyers disappeared from sight. The next cry was "and what has happened to the children?". The children returned unharmed, some excited, some tearful, and the day belonged to Ruby who was always a good storyteller.

And I think that we would agree that John tells a pretty good tale too. In part two, which we hope to publish in March 2016 John will reveal more about the characters who lived in the town and the shops in Stromness at that time.

Now just in case anyone is curious about the teu names (nicknames) given to old Bilcome and young Bilcome the explanation is as follows.

Old Bilcome's full nickname was Bill-come-lately simply because he was never on time for anything.

Now the Orkney habit of naming the eldest son after the father often causes confusion so the simplest way round this was to nickname him Young Bilcome.

But, as they, there's more.

The second of the Sinclair sons was called John and, unlike his father, John was never late but always arrived early. This trait did not go unnoticed and he was given the nickname – Earlo.

How do I know all this you might ask?

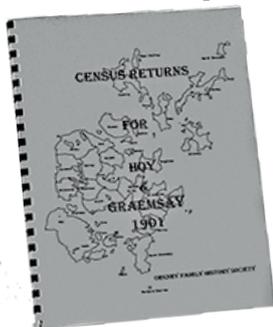
Well Old Bilcome-lately was my grandfather. Young Bilcome was my uncle and Earlo was my dad. He was Earlo as a boy and Earlo till his dying day and throughout there long lives I never heard my mother ever call him by anything other than his teu or Nickname John Sinclair. Editor.

If you want to know about Orcadians broken down by age, work and sex you've come to the right place.

We have produced census booklets for every parish in Orkney, from 1841 to 1911 and in some cases for 1821 too.

They are available in a handy A4 format and contain the following information:-

- The descriptions of the enumeration districts.
- A surname index giving a list of property references where all the 'surnames' are.
- The transcript of the census.



Go to www.orkneyfhs.co.uk and click on the link for 'publications'. To find the list of censuses available just click the order form and proceed with your purchase from there.

If you have lost the plot trying to locate the grave of a family member this could help you find it.

There's no pleasure in tramping round an Orkney graveyard in the wind and rain so our volunteers have done it for you.

It is an ongoing project, and a massive job and we are now more than half way through it.

The results are available in the form of A4 booklets and contain a mine of information.

- A plan of the graveyard.
- A surname index giving a list of stone references.
- A transcript of the monuments.



To find out which graveyards have been completed, and how to obtain the booklets, go to www.orkneyfhs.co.uk and click the link 'publications'.

An order form can also be opened from this link.



My Browns have been in Orkney since they were Brouns. . . .and that was in the 1600s

By Ingrid Morrison, Member No 1507

Since returning to Stromness in the early eighties I have been interested in researching the Browns in this area.

It all started when I looked into the history of our house at 111 Victoria St. I found that the original owners were **Andrew Angus** and his wife **Catherine**. She was a Melvin and a heir to the Melvin Estate. Three of her sisters had married Browns. **John Brown** had married **Cecilia Melvin**, **Samuel Brown** married **Ann Melvin** and **William Brown** married **Isabella Melvin**. If these Browns had money of their own is not known but we do know they married into money and their families prospered in the town in the 1800s. They were known as the Melvin Browns.

My father always said that the first Brown of our family had come into the area with **Bishop Graham** in the early 1600s. The original name would have been **Broun**; **Broune** and finally **Brown**. My father also said that the original Brown had been a factor to the Bishop, but he is named as a servant in the Breckness estate papers. He must have been an important man in the service of the Bishop as his family prospered in the century to follow. They spread out in the district occupying the farms around.

The Bishop had the estate of Breckness. His family occupied the Castle up to 1808 but by then it was in need of repair. In 1878 the mouldings were stripped and it was left to fall into ruin. One third of the Bu of Breckness 22 acres was occupied by **Alexander Broun** and his wife **Agnes Tailour** from 1610 to 1620; from 1620 to 1628 by their son **James Brown**; from 1628 to 1638 by sons **Alex** and **Francis Brown**; and from 1741 to 1779 **James Brown** and his spouse **Katherine Beaton**. In 1811 to 1835 there was a **Peter Brown** then **William Brown** in the Bu. The Brown / Beattons were in the Bu up to the 1900s.

Between 1611-84 **Sinclair** was the most common name in Orkney; **Flett** was third and **Brown** was ninth. By the 1690s we were down to fourteenth and in 1841 we were twenty second. After that we fell off the graph. The Browns were on the decline and many had moved into the town.

In 1690 **King William** was at war with the French.

He needed money for his war and there was a Poll Tax. This was very hard on the people as they were suffering from bad harvests, but it was good for historians as it was an excellent source of the population at that time. There was a **John Brown** in the Glebe Lands; those were the church lands and in the church records of that time he was in charge of the money taken each Sunday. He would be charged with the funds for the

poor. "Sunday the 20th of September 1696 Sermon made. The collection was 14/s whereof 7/s was given **John Broune** to keep, the rest given to the poor. The reader got 6/s from **John Broune** so there remained..... which added unto the 17/s making 19/s 9ds"

In 1718 the Warbeth church was in need of repair so a new church was to be

built in the growing village of Stromness. It was built on a site at the Top of Church Road. It is still there but now our town Community Centre. The pews were allocated to the minister and other Heritors. These included **William Brown** of Garth, **James Brown** of Brockan and **Alex Brown** of Mousland.

Our branch of the Browns can be traced through records of **John Brown** and **Ann Moar** who lived at the croft of Knockhall. They proudly announced the birth of their son **Samuel** in the year 1790. Their eldest child was **Margaret** born in 1780. She married **John Linklater** and she and her family continued to live in Outertown. In the 1821 census they were living in Heatherbraes and later they were in the Citadale and then Kingshouse, Outertown. I can only find two other children. **James** born in 1781 and **William** 1784 who died and then another **William** born 1799. Family names were usually handed down so I can imagine there was an older child, a son named **John** after his father. We know that our ancestor **Samuel** didn't inherit the family farm, instead he became a shoemaker in the new town of Stromness.

Later on I have found Knockhall still belonging in the Brown family. **Samuel** married **Jean (Isabella Brodie)** on the 2nd April 1814. They had a large family: Ann born▶

Ingrid Morrison has begun the monumental task of researching her family of Browns in Orkney. It is an ongoing project and we are publishing Ingrid's results so far in the hope that some of our members might be able to add to her findings.

There will now be many thousands of descendants of this family all over the world and hopefully her article may strike a chord with someone somewhere. I have told Ingrid that quite often an article in Sib Folk News can have quite dramatic results, so members, please don't let me down. Ed.

◀1815, **Margaret** 1816, **Jean** 1818, **Isabella** 1820, **Samuel** 1825, **John** and **James** (twins) 1827, **John** (who was my g-grandfather) 1833. **William** 1835, **Peter** 1837, **David** 1837.

In 1830 **Samuel** was living with his family in a house up Browns Close. This house belonged to him, described as a small dwelling house or Tofall. He wanted to raise money for a venture which is not known. He may have wished to extend his business. On the 24th of April he borrowed money from **James Brown** and **Robert Clouston** who was an innkeeper in Stromness. The money borrowed was £36. I think that **James Brown**, who was a merchant living at the bottom of Hellihole, was a close relation as his family later owned lots of property in Stromness and one of their properties was Knockhall. He could have been a first cousin or even his older brother. Unfortunately Samuel could not repay his debt and so the family lost their house, but they continued to live in the house and finally at the end of the century. The house came into the family once again when, in 1895, it is registered as belonging to **John Brown**, Samuel's son and my great grandfather. After his death it continued to belong to **Margaret** his wife. Margaret was a daughter of **David Sinclair** who was the headteacher in Hoy. Perhaps it was her inheritance that brought the house once more into the family. Unfortunately it was an old house and in 1935 it was condemned. It was situated at the top of Browns Close.

In 1841 **Samuel** is 15 and **John**, **William**, **Peter** and **David** are at home. As we have no record of the first three children **Ann**, **Margaret** and **Jean** in the later census records, we can only think that they died young. In 1851 **Isabella** is home, 28 and unmarried. Young **Samuel** is a shoemaker working with his father. **William** is an apprentice carpenter. **Peter** is still at school and so is **David**. In 1861 **Isabella** is still unmarried working with her father as a boot binder. **John** is a shoemaker, **David** is now a carpenter journeyman and they have a nephew **John Brown** aged 25, who is working with his uncle as a shoemaker. Next door is **James** the twin, married to **Bethia** who was born in Kirkwall; they never had family. In 1871 old **Samuel** has died and **John** has married **Margaret Sinclair**. **Jean** lives with them, she is now 77. Samuel's son **Peter** went to sea and became a master mariner. He married and had one daughter before going down with his ship.

The information below was supplied by his descendant **John Maddocks**. There was a mystery with his name, **Peter Brown Brown**, as that was not on his birth certificate. Often if there was another **Peter Brown** on the company books they were asked to supply a middle name to make payments easier. **Captain Peter Brown Brown**, Master Mariner, married **Susannah Hall** at Church of St John the Divine, Fairfield, West Derby, Liverpool on 15 February 1877. In 1877 **Captain Peter B Brown**, barque *Thomas Brocklebank*, was presented with a Silver medal from *Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society* for rescuing crew of schooner *Louie A Swett* abandoned in Atlantic

gale 10 August 1877. In 1879, **Alice Jean Brown**, my grandmother was born on 22 August at 419 Mill Street Liverpool. In 1881 census **Peter & Susannah** were living 79 Beresford Road, Toxteth Park, Liverpool with daughter (my grandmother) **Alice Jean** (b. 1879 d.1965). In 1882 **Peter Brown Brown** died 4 March at sea and is interred in Belize. He was identified by name sewn in socks. In the 1891 census **Susannah & Alice** were living at 82 Geriant Street, Toxteth Park, Liverpool. In the 1901 census **Susannah & Alice** were living at 85 Cemetery Road Southport. **Alice** went on to marry and there are many descendants of **Peter** all living now in England.

John Brown my great grandfather married **Margaret Stewart Sinclair** on the 5th October 1865 in the schoolhouse Hoy. Their children were **Peter**, born in 1867, who become an officer in the Salvation Army and then a Congregational Minister. He married and his family now reside in Scotland, Vancouver, London and Norway. His sister **Bethia** (named after her aunt) was born in 1868. She married **John Ure** and they moved to America. **Margaret**, b. 1869, married **R Logie**, they had three children **John**, **Rita** and **David**—none married. When left a widow she later married **R Gaskin**. **Ann**, b. 1874 married **John Mackenzie**. He was a gamekeeper living on the outskirts of Glasgow. They had three children **John**, **Ann** and **Betty**. **John** 1876 married **Mary Mackay** in June 1910. She came from Strathy in Sutherland. Children were: **Ruby** b. 1911, **Hugh** b. 1913, **John Clouston** b.1914. **Harold** b. 1916 (died young), **Richard (Norrie)** b. 1919, **George Mackay Brown** b. 1921. **James** b. 1877, also married a **Mary Mackay** who was born in Stromness. They had two daughters: **Elizabeth Robina** born 1880 and **Catherine** born 1882. Both **Robina** and **Catherine** remained unmarried and stayed with their mother in Browns close, working as dressmakers. **Robina** inherited the house after her mother and, after her early death, **Catherine** inherited the house but sold it shortly after to her sister **Ann** who lived in Glasgow. **Catherine** had moved in as a housekeeper to a family in town. In 1935 the house was in poor repair and soon after was declared derelict and condemned.

Looking through the census of 1821 there were many families of Brown living in the town. The three who had married the Melvin girls were doing very well in trade and commerce, and had large families growing up. **John** who married **Cecilia Melvin** is a merchant and they have a family of six. **Samuel** who married **Ann Melvin** is a boatbuilder and they have a family of seven. **William** had married **Isabella Melvin** and also is a merchant with a family of four. There are other Brown merchants, boatbuilders and farmers.

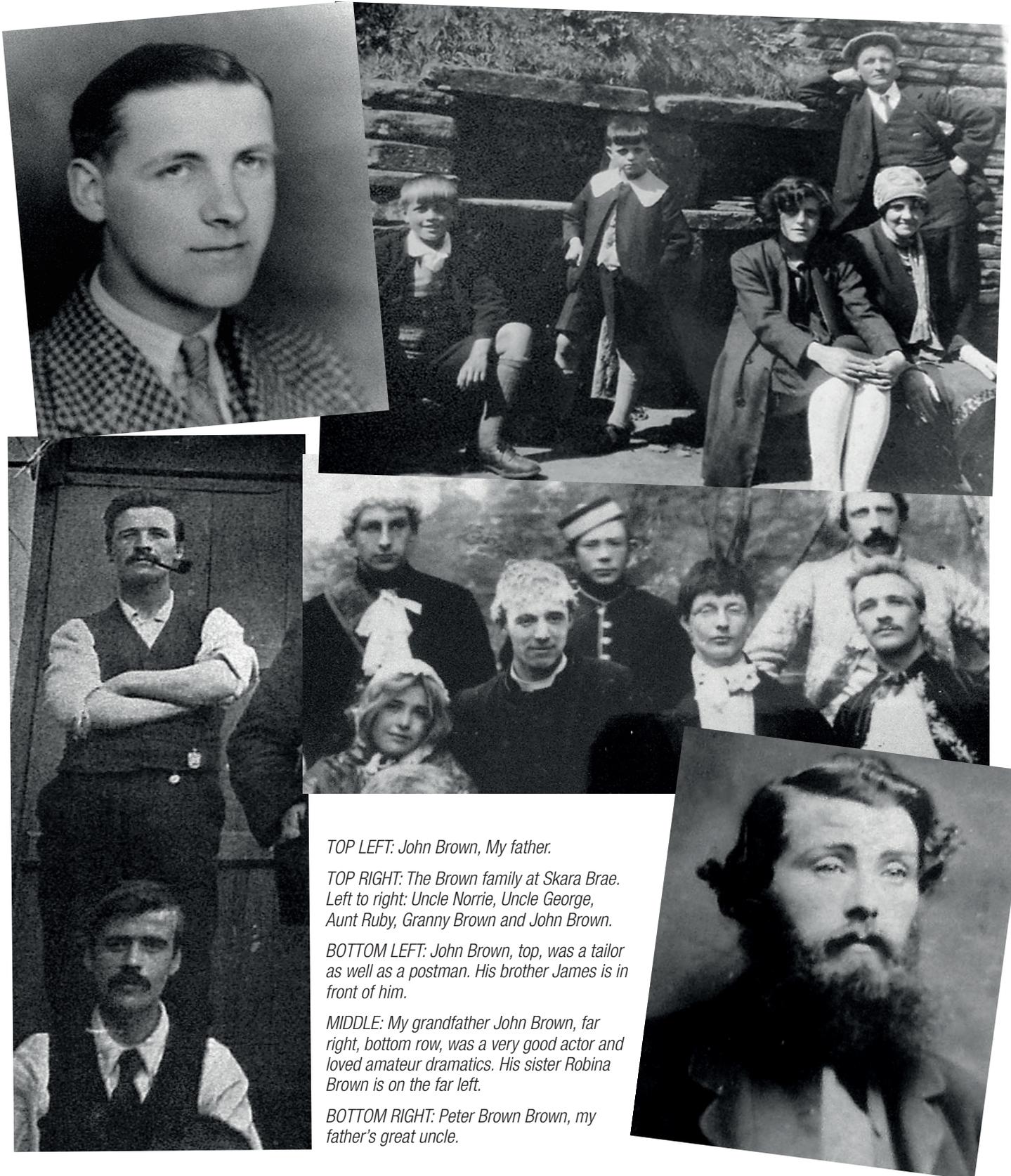
In the 1841 census there are fewer Browns. The Melvin/Browns are still merchants. There is a **Marion Brown** in Knockhall, and our **Samuel** is in town working as a shoemaker. What became of the Browns? I can only think that, like many families, they got scattered around the world. The wealthy ones moved to larger cities to continue in commerce. All that remains ▶

now in Stromness are my brother **Dr John Brown**, myself and my cousin Allison's daughter who has just returned from Australia to live in the town. We are what remains of the original family of Outertown Browns.

So there it is—my story to date. If you have anything to add, observations or corrections to make, please get in touch.

The family photographs might strike a chord with some of our members and if so I would be delighted to hear from them.

Email me at: ingirid.morrison@yahoo.co.uk and I will try to reply promptly. Please note Norse spelling of 'ingirid'. ■



TOP LEFT: John Brown, My father.

TOP RIGHT: The Brown family at Skara Brae. Left to right: Uncle Norrie, Uncle George, Aunt Ruby, Granny Brown and John Brown.

BOTTOM LEFT: John Brown, top, was a tailor as well as a postman. His brother James is in front of him.

MIDDLE: My grandfather John Brown, far right, bottom row, was a very good actor and loved amateur dramatics. His sister Robina Brown is on the far left.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Peter Brown Brown, my father's great uncle.



By Pat Long, Member No 1531

On 8 October, Patricia Long gave a talk to the Society on the war-time experiences of her grandfather's first cousin, William Leask, and read excerpts from the book he wrote, "Behind the Barbed Wire in Germany". The book was never published but was serialised in *The Orcadian*, beginning in December 1936. An article on his descriptions of the battle was published in last year's September issue of the newsletter. This is the rest of the story.

William James Smith Leask was born in Stepney in 1889, which makes him a Cockney, but he was Orcadian through and through. His father William had grown up at Coldomo in Stenness and gone to sea, rising to be master of 'The City of Florence'. His mother Barbara had grown up near the London docks but was the daughter of Thomas Mowat, a ship's carpenter from Birsay, and Jane Young, whose father Andrew had been a pilot in Stromness.

William and his younger brothers, Thomas and Harold, moved to Orkney after their mother died in 1894 and grew up at Coldomo. William became a marine engineer in Glasgow and then, when war broke out, he joined the 8th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders and, after training at Aldershot and Salisbury Plain, sailed to France in July 1915. This was presumably part of the preparation for the 'Big Push', which we now know as the Battle of Loos, which was fought on 25th September.

As described in Issue 71, the attack on the town of Loos was led by the Seaforth Highlanders and the Black Watch, who then pushed on towards Lens but they pushed on too far and reinforcements didn't arrive. As they approached the suburbs of Lens, they came under heavy fire and had to halt on open ground.

"I remember lying with my nose buried in the ground scooping the earth in front with my trenching tool. Lying there with my nose in the ground, the sweet smell of white clover, which was growing all around us, made one think what a farce it all was."

"I wonder how many bullets were fired for every man hit. The tune of them sounded continuously. The ping, ping, as they went past one's head, and the zipp, ipp, as they struck the earth beside one, got monotonous."

After two hours, orders were given to turn back and William was hit in the chest about two hundred yards short of the British line. He tried to reach it but fell and passed out. He came to, a couple of hours later, and spent two nights and a day lying wounded in No Man's Land,

with the battle raging over him, until his thirst grew so bad that he shouted to attract the attention of the Germans. Two young soldiers crawled out and dragged him into their trench.

After a couple of days William found himself in a hospital run by French nuns in Douai. He discovered later that he had been put in what he called the death ward. Doctors often told him later that he was very lucky to be alive. He was there for seventeen days until recovered enough to be sent to a hospital in Wesel-on-Rhine in Germany, which did its best for the patients but William said that he was always hungry and that this was to be a chronic complaint for the next three years.

At the end of December he was fit enough to leave. Before he left he received two letters and a postcard from home. For nine weeks his family and his fiancée, Mary Drysdale, had thought he was dead.

The first camp was in Dulmen, 32 kilometres from the Dutch border. It was bitterly cold and William felt it particularly badly as he was still weak, and just had a khaki uniform to wear. He had stolen the trousers to replace the kilt that had drawn far too much attention but he didn't have a coat. After a week or two there, he was told there were two parcels for him.

"Never in all my life was I so thrilled to receive a parcel. Down I went to the parcel office, all excitement to draw them, and discovered one was clothes and one was precious food – could not have been better. The clothes parcel contained a greatcoat and a pair of thick trousers which I wanted to put on at once, but the censors took them away to get the brown bands sewn on. How excited I was to see the censor empty out my food parcel on the counter and see the various precious contents come to view – biscuits, bully beef, condensed milk, tea, sugar, cigarettes, and last but not least one of those glorious four pound tins of golden syrup. Shall we prisoners ever forget them?"

The Regimental Associations were in charge of sending the parcels and William said the Seaforth Highlanders would ever bless the name of their ministering angel, Vera, who headed the organising committee. Parcels came quite regularly and were vitally important as food became worse and worse. William was impressed that they were not intercepted by the German soldiers, even when their rations became pitifully scarce.

Shortly afterwards, William was sent to a camp in Dortmund, to work in the steel works. After just ▶

Eight days, he made the first of his escape attempts, along with two other men, but his wound hadn't quite healed and they had to give up after a couple of days. They were sent to a much better run camp, Munster Lager II in Westphalia, where the camp commandant, General von Bitten, was a soldier first and foremost.

"On one occasion a gang of us British prisoners were marching along to the camp, when we saw the old General standing. We pulled ourselves together and went swinging along, all in step. When we came up to the General he halted us, and going up to the sentry, who was marching in front, checked him for having his belt slack and being slovenly. He then told the sentry to look at the British prisoners and take a lesson from them how to come on parade."

In October 1916 William was transferred to Soest, to work in a sugar-beet factory and made his next escape attempt six weeks later. This one again only lasted a few days, as he fell into a deep hole in the dark and hurt his leg too badly to carry on. William risked being shot during his escape attempts and spent three weeks on bread and water in solitary confinement every time but it didn't stop him trying.

His next camp was Sennelager, which he described as "...quite a cheery camp, nearly all the prisoners there having been taken at the retreat from Mons in 1914." They had a wonderful brass band as there were six regular army bandmasters who had been working as stretcher-bearers when they were captured at Mons. Unfortunately, the camp was broken up in January and William found himself at Minden, which he described as the worst camp he was ever in. The commandant, General Wolfe, hated the British and made the place "...a living hell."

Sometime in the summer, William made his next escape attempt with two friends, Gerrard and Robertson. They got out through a loosened window in their hut and walked for six nights, to within seven miles of the Dutch border

"We could scarcely sleep through excitement that day; we pored over the map and made all sorts of plans. Would the next day see us free men in Holland?"

At nine pm we had a look round and discovered we were on the edge of a big moor which stretched in the direction we wished to go.

There was not a sign of life and the only signs of habitation were a church steeple about three miles away to the left and what looked like an old ruin about one mile away, which lay directly in our course. We had our biscuits and waited until ten pm and as there was not a sign of life, although still daylight, we started off. This was a most mad action; there we were about six or seven miles from Holland and had been taking every precaution up till then, and when we should have been extra cautious we threw caution to the winds and moved off in day light. I can only put it down to excitement and nervousness.

On crossing the moor we discovered it was all covered with trenches where they had been cutting peats and the men we had heard talking through the day had been engaged in that occupation."

They walked for a while and struck a little used railway line that they started to walk along. Then two men and a large dog came up behind them – they had been seen crossing the moor. What they had taken as an old ruin

was a convict station holding fifty prisoners who were cutting peat. They were told that another two hours would have got them across the border and if they had only waited another hour they would not have been seen.

"We bitterly cursed our folly and were so disgusted and fed up we dared not speak to one another."

We were well treated during our stay at Velen but it was most tantalising to think freedom was only the distance of a pleasant evening stroll away. An old farmer with a wagon spoke to us through the fence for quite a long while. He was just leaving for Holland with a load of hay. Oh to have got in amongst the hay! We watched his load going down the road with yearning eyes. One hour and he would be in Holland, with a free road to Scotland before him if he so wished, while we were going back to the depths."

William really was going to the depths; he was sent to work in dreadful conditions in a coal mine, with a ten mile walk there and back every day.

"There were times at the mine when I was too fed up and miserable for words. We knew we were on a punishment commando, but still we half expected to be treated like human beings, and not like badly treated beasts. I will give the unter (under) officer credit for being able to prevent prisoners escaping. He did not leave one loophole."

After several months, towards the end of 1917, William hurt his leg so badly that he couldn't work for two months and was happy to be sent back to Sennelager. When he was fit again, he went to work on the railway in Dusseldorf and saw how desperate life in Germany was becoming. Food had always been poor in the camps, for the guards as well as the prisoners, but now butchers' shops were only open one day a fortnight and sold what they had to the first in line. William's fourth escape attempt ended after two days because he hadn't realised that the lack of food was becoming so desperate that soldiers were guarding allotments at night.

William's four escape attempts had now given him a very bad record and he was sent to another coal mine.

"My heart sank right down to my boots. In fact, I thought, "much more of this and the Germans will break my heart." Then I had had three years of being knocked about from pillar to post, and I felt I could not stand much more of it."

After a few months, William managed to get another compass, without which an escape attempt was impossible, and with two other men, a Londoner called Gailler and a South African called Cockcroft, he set off again, on the night of 10th November 1918.

They slept by day and walked by night for three days until they were found sleeping by two men who turned out to be POWs who said, "Pack up, the bloody war's over". They wouldn't believe him until shown a newspaper that listed the Armistice terms.

The POWs wanted them to stay and go home with them but William said that after three years, he was taking no chances. After a meal of hot rice and raisins and a mug of tea, which he described as one of the finest meals he ever tasted, the three men set off again, as the POWs sang "You'll tak the high road and I'll tak the low road."

They walked on for another night, slept in a bed of bracken and set off for the frontier. It was very hard to tell exactly where it was and they crossed to and ▶

◀fro a few times until they saw a sentry standing in the road.

“We hurriedly decided to walk up to him, and perhaps he would allow us to pass, seeing the Armistice was on. We had advanced a few paces when he shouted “Halt” and two other men came running out of a hut at the side of the road. As the sentry drew near, I saw he had a different head-dress from that worn by the Germans, so I asked in German if he was a Hollander. He replied, “Yes, you are in Holland now.” What a feeling! No words could describe it. It was all over at long last.”

It took three weeks but it was finally William’s turn to board a ship at Rotterdam, having first been kitted out again as a soldier.

“The following morning I saw the finest piece of organisation I had seen in the whole war. We were marched to the other side of the dock and into a shed. We went in single file and as we entered there were several military tailors standing waiting for us. In the sheds were several great stacks of full kit bags, and on entering we were sized up by a tailor and directed to a stack, according to our size. As we passed the stacks, a kitbag was slung at us and we continued moving without a halt. In the kitbag was a new khaki uniform, great-coat and under-clothing. Continuing on we passed stacks of boots and on shouting our size a pair was flung at us. A little further on were stacks of caps, and one of these was flung at us on shouting our size. So it was a case of entering the end of a shed and marching right through without a halt, but on emerging we had a complete new outfit.”

“On entering the Humber boom, all the drifters sounded their sirens. When we went alongside the landing stage, there were thousands of people down, seeing it was Sunday. We old hands from Germany saw W.A.A.C.s, W.R.A.A.F.s, and W.R.E.N.s for the first time. It seemed as if we were coming into a strange land. When the actual moment came for landing, one could not help thinking, “What about the boys we left behind, who will never set foot on their own shores again.” I think all the men had the same thoughts, for there was a dead silence. Not a man had a word to shout, not even to a girl. The moment was too great.”

William married his fiancée Mary Drysdale the following year and they emigrated to Southern Rhodesia, where they raised three daughters and established Coldomo Farm, which seems to be there still.

On 30 January 1920, the London Gazette listed Lance Corporal WJS Leask of 8th Battalion Seaforth Highlanders as one of the names brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for war for gallant conduct and determination displayed in escaping or attempting to escape. ■



MEMBERS' DIRECTORY

Some time ago we decided for reasons of economy—prohibitive postage costs—to stop issuing our annual Members' Directory.

It seems that many members are unaware that a regularly updated Member's' Directory can be readily accessed on our website and when you discover this I think you will agree that it is even better than the old printed edition.

To find it open up www.orkneyfhs.co.uk then log-in with your membership number and OFHS password (if you have forgotten this you will see the means of recovering it).

Once you have logged in the welcome page opens. Now click **Members Page** in the left hand column. On the page that opens click **Members Directory** from the menu across the top. This takes you to the search page. Simply type in the name of the member you are looking for or their membership number and click the panel to the right of these.

Eureka! You've got it – all the OFHS members with that surname allowing you to locate the one you want. ■

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM EVERYONE AT THE ORKNEY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

If you still have a belated Christmas gift to send or a gift for any other occasion, a membership of our Family History Society would make a wonderful and most unusual present—and an economical one too.

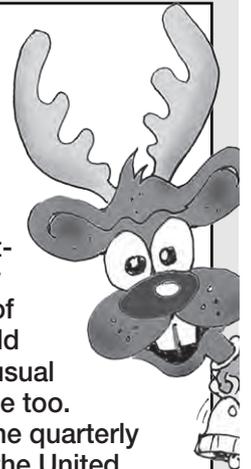
A 12 month subscription, with the quarterly newsletter mailed to anyone in the United Kingdom costs only £10.

Overseas membership with a copy of the newsletter airmailed every quarter is available for only £18.

With every subscription comes all the benefits associated with the OFHS.

- Help with family history research
- Access to our extensive records including including local census books and graveyard surveys.
- A personal password to our website.
- Four 24 page newsletters a year.

To order go to www.orkneyfhs.co.uk and link to gift subscriptions. Complete as required.



If every member decided to send me a 1 page article I wouldn't need to ask again for 18 years—maybe longer

Every issue I appeal to members for articles to fill Sib Folk News and every issue is still a struggle to complete. We have over 1500 paid up members and I still cannot get the 15 or 16 articles I require to fill each issue without resorting to 'padding' blank pages.

It shouldn't be difficult to produce even a 1 page article. I am sure that most members have an interesting family story that they could share with their fellow members. You don't need to be a professional writer and it doesn't matter if you get your possessives and apostrophies in a fankle, we'll sort them out before publication.

Here's an outline which might help. Follow it and before you know it you will have produced a 'story'.

You could start with a timeline guide to keep things on track—it will keep things in a historical context. For example you could begin with your ancestors leaving Orkney and give details of their parents, siblings, grandparents, location, birthplace, employment etc. Where did they go; what did they do; did they marry; have a family? What did the family do? How did it develop over the generations to the present day? Include family anecdotes and stories.

Lots of information can be gleaned from baptismal records, birth certificates, marriage and death certificates if you have them.

Photographs are important too. People, places, weddings, etc all keep the interest going.

If you want to delve deeper www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk have more than 100 million records available. ancestry.co.uk have over 14 billion.

The internet is now awash with family history material. Just google Family History and you'll see what I mean—quite a lot is free too!

As a member of the Orkney Family History Society you have access to an unrivalled range of Orcadian Genealogical resources. Our website www.orkneyfhs.co.uk is crammed with useful info. Queries to our Research Secretary can often help break down 'brick walls' when you get stuck—as we all do.

So there you have it. Follow these guidelines and a page should be no bother. Its just 900 words and even that can be cut down with the inclusion of a photograph, or two, or three. Check the side panel and off you go.



HERE IS WHAT I NEED

Articles can be as short as a page or longer and even spread over a few issues if necessary. A rough guide is 900 words for the first page. I will produce a suitable graphic header. Include photographs and less words are required. Subsequent pages will require about 1100 words and this allows for the inclusion of a photograph.

Articles should be produced in plain text and not formatted. A Word doc is fine. Photos should be scanned at 300dpi or 'highest quality' and larger than you envisage them in the final article. Supply photos separately. Do not embed in article. Email as JPGs attachments to

johnsin@gotadsl.co.uk

If scanning is a problem you can post copies to me and I will scan and re-touch them for you.

John Sinclair, Burnbrae, 21 Burnside, Kirkwall. Orkney KW15 1TF

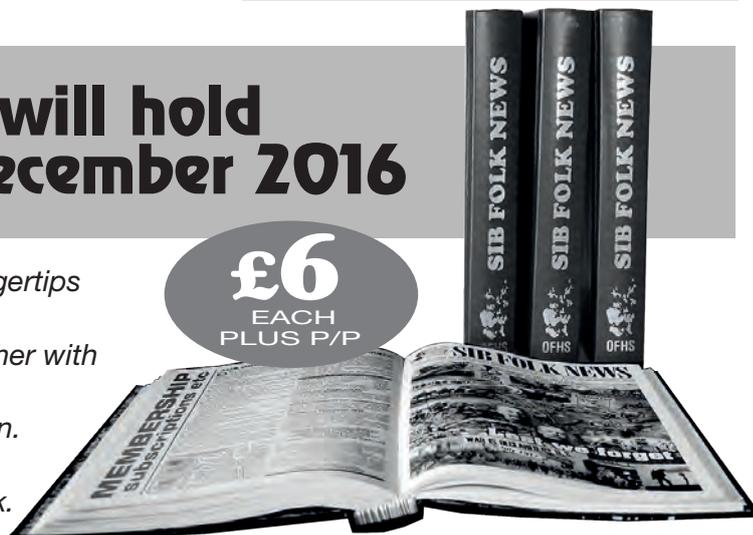
4 of these binders will hold every copy up to December 2016

That will give you over 1900 pages at your fingertips in these easy to load, open flat binders.

They are finished in dark green simulated leather with attractive gold blocked spines

Individually boxed to arrive in perfect condition.

For postage rates to your area consult www.orkneyfhs.co.uk under the publications link.



THE ORKNEY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Orkney Family History Society was formed in 1997 and is run by a committee of volunteers.

It is similar to societies operating worldwide where members share a mutual interest in family history and help each other with research and, from time to time, assist in special projects concerning the countless records and subjects available to us all in finding our roots.

The main objectives are:

1 To establish a local organisation for the study, collection, analysis and sharing of information about individuals and families in Orkney.

2 To establish and maintain links with other family history groups and genealogical societies throughout the UK and overseas.

3. To establish and maintain a library and other reference facilities as an information resource for members and approved subscribers.

4. To promote study projects and special interest groups to pursue approved assignments.

We are located on the upper floor of the Kirkwall Library next to the archives department and are open Mon-Fri 2pm-4.30pm and Sat 11am-4.30pm.

Our own library, though small at the moment, holds a variety of information including:

The IGI for Orkney on microfiche.

The Old Parish Records on microfilm.

The Census Returns on microfilm transcribed on to a computer database.

Family Trees.

Emigration and Debtors lists.

Letters, Articles and stories concerning Orkney and its people.

Hudson's Bay Company information.

Graveyard Surveys (long term project).

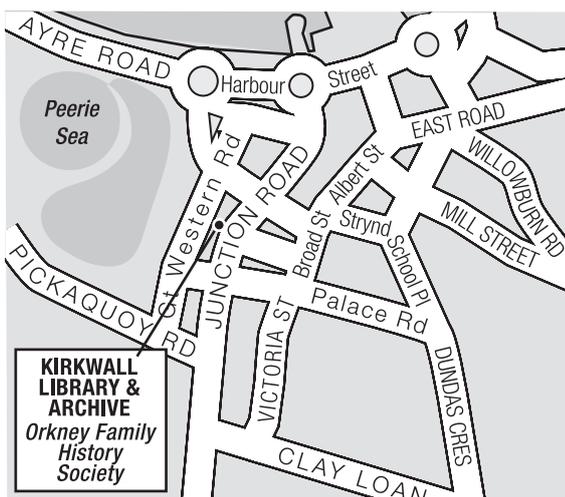
This material is available to members for 'in house' research by arrangement.

Locally we have a Members' Evening, most months, with a guest speaker.

We produce a booklet of members and interests to allow members with similar interests to correspond with each other if they wish.

We also produce a newsletter 4 times a year and are always looking for articles and photographs of interest. A stamped addressed envelope should be included if these are to be returned. Back copies of the magazine can be purchased at £1 per copy.

We can usually undertake research for members who live outwith Orkney but this is dependent on the willingness of our island members giving up their spare time to help. Any costs incurred, such as fees for certificates, will require to be reimbursed by the member.



NEW MEMBERS

Membership of the Society is through subscription and runs for a period of 12 months from date of application.

Our magazine, 'Sib Folk News' is available to members every 3 months unless they have agreed to 'opt out' (see new rate structure) as all issues are now available online. Our 'Members' Directory' can also be found online at www.orkneyfhs.co.uk following links *members page/ Members' Directory*. This lists members' contact details and their research interests.

Members will receive a password to access the members' pages on the website, details of which are shown on the Home Page.

A great deal of research can be achieved through these resources at www.orkneyfhs.co.uk.

RATES FROM 1st SEPTEMBER 2013

1. All UK Membership and overseas members opting out of receiving a printed copy of Sib Folk News (available on our website)	£10.00
2. OVERSEAS - Surface Mail	£15.00
3. OVERSEAS - Air Mail	£18.00

NEW MEMBERS - DOWNLOAD THESE and SEND WITH YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

Visit www.orkneyfhs.co.uk/docs/mempack.pdf where you will find a New Membership Application form and a blank Family Tree. Please complete these, print and send with the appropriate subscription to The Treasurer at the address below.

EXISTING MEMBERS CAN RENEW ONLINE

Existing members wanting to renew their subscription can now do so online. Just Log In and use the link from My Details on the Member's Page. You can, of course, still send your subscription to the Treasurer at OFHS.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE RATE

Overseas members, paying in their own currency, should check the exchange rate to ensure the correct amount is forwarded. Our bank will accept overseas cheques without charging commission. We regret that foreign Postal Orders are not acceptable in the UK.

Members residing in the UK may pay their subscriptions by Bankers Order and if they wish can have their subscriptions treated as Gift Aid donations. Forms are available on request.

Cheques should be made payable to:-
ORKNEY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
 and forwarded to The Treasurer
ORKNEY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
 Orkney Library & Archive

44 Junction Rd. Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1AG
 Scotland.

Telephone 01856 879207

General enquires should be addressed to the office in writing or to Treasurer George Gray (e-mail: george.gray147@btinternet.com)
 General Secy. Jackie Harrison (e-mail: jackie.harrison@orkney.com)
 Research Secy. Enquiries should be sent to George Gray until a new research secretary is appointed

Editor. John Sinclair (e-mail: johnsin@gotadsl.co.uk)

Orkney Family History Society website— www.orkneyfhs.co.uk

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