Welcome to our special edition of the Sib Folk News to celebrate The Orkney Family History Society 20th Anniversary. In January the committee hosted a lunch for the volunteers in the Ayre Hotel so I could personally thank them all on behalf of the committee and our members for the many hours they have committed to transcribing and recording records for our Archive, helping with dispatching the Sib Folk News and most importantly helping our visitors and members who visit the office or contact us with queries about their family research. A special mention must go to Janice Sinclair who was our first researcher who corresponded with many of our members and gave them invaluable help with their family research and when she died very suddenly in 2002 George Gray took on the job as well as being our Treasurer.

We have grown from a small society with less than 100 members in 1997 to 1500 members in over 22 countries in 2017. The Orkney Islands Council have always been very supportive of the society, by renting us our first office at the back of Visit Orkney in Broad Street then to our second office in the Strynd and finally where we are now in the Library right next to the Archive which is the perfect location for us.

The Sib folk News is also celebrating its 20th year with the first magazine being edited by Gavin Rendall in February 1997 and when he decided to retire Olaf Mooney took up the baton for a few years before John Sinclair agreed to help us out. The magazine has evolved into a publication we can rightly be very proud of and I would go as far to say that it is one of the best. Like everyone else we have to move with the times it was decided that we should have a web-site and luckily for us we had just the man for the job, our computer programmer, Dave Higgins, got a new title, web master. He has put a huge amount of work into making it user friendly and secure. This has meant that our members are now able to access our census records, monumental inscriptions and many more resources that we have in the office, and as a result, has cut down on the queries we are getting in the office. Jackie Harrison has set up and administers our Facebook page which has now over 1500 likes.

Last but, no means least, I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Gavin Rendall and Nan Scott have both made to the Society, without their drive and determination at the beginning the project would never have got off the ground.

To you all, Thank You.

Anne Rendall

PS Just a reminder that the June issue will be back to our usual format so keep emailing those articles and photographs to our editor John Sinclair at john.sinclair@burnside.myzen.co.uk
When Gavin Rendall held a meeting in Kirkwall to discuss the set up of the Orkney Family History Society back in October 1996 I was sitting in the audience when Gavin asked “Is there a George Gray here tonight?” As a result a great many of the audience pointed to me and then Gavin asked me if I would be willing to come on a steering committee to discuss the setting up of the Orkney Family History Society. I agreed to go on the committee with Nan Scott being the second person to volunteer for the committee. By the end of the meeting we had 9 people who agreed to serve on the committee. I agreed to be the Treasurer and here I am 20 years after the original meeting still acting as Treasurer. Nan Scott agreed to become our first Chairman and continued in this position until 2004. Since that first meeting Nan and I have had lots of good times at the Society’s meetings, annual outings, annual dinners and celebrating important birthdays together. Nan has always been our matriarch from the start. If you look up the meaning of matriarch it says:

(1) A woman who rules a family, clan, or tribe.
(2) A woman who dominates a group or an activity.
(3) A highly respected woman who is a mother.

That truly describes our Nan.

I also found that she was related to me 3 different ways. At the first few meetings of the steering committee I realised that of the 9 members at least 5 of us were related and 4 of us had Westray ancestors.

On the 6th February 1997 a meeting was held when the Orkney Family History Society was inaugurated. By this time the steering committee had arranged everything that was needed for the new Society to be launched. Also the first Orkney Family History Society’s first edition of its magazine “Sib Folk News” was handed out to all at the meeting. It was agreed at the meeting that the Orkney Family History Society should be launched and that the steering committee should all be voted in as the committee for the Society. Brigadier Sydney Robertson was also delighted to become our Honorary President. There was a man who appeared at the meeting with a laptop and who asked to say a few words to the audience. We soon discovered that this was Dave Higgins and although none of the audience understood a word he said or had any idea what he was talking about the committee realised that a man arriving with a laptop had to be a good sign and that they obviously had a good man here and so Dave Higgins was voted on to our committee despite his strong Yorkshire accent. Indeed we still have a good man in Dave and he has faithfully attended to all our computer problems and our website. Without Nan Scott and Dave Higgins the Society would never have become so successful. I may have helped a bit too!

At the start of the Society the only funds we had were £90, which was 9 subscriptions paid by the committee. Today our funds stand at £42,000.

We have had 3 offices since the Society started, one in Broad Street, then in the Strynd and then the Orkney Islands Council gave us an office in the newly built Orkney Library & Archive building which opened in December 2003.

In 2004 my wife Elaine and I were invited to the Queen’s Garden Party at Holyrood Palace. I was not sure why we had been invited but came to the conclusion it must have been to do with my involvement with the Orkney Family History Society.

One of the biggest tasks the Society has had to deal with was the Canadian Homecoming in June 1999. It was an emotional sight watching the “Homecomers” sailing into Stromness on the “St Ola” flying the Canadian Flag, with the Stromness Pipe Band playing on the pier. Many of the visitors were in tears as they set foot on Orkney where their ancestors had left from over 150 years ago. The first ones I spoke to said that they were here to visit “The Taits”. I said that I hoped we would be able to help
them find the right family as there were many “Taits” here in Orkney. The Orkney Islands Council kindly put on a magnificent reception for the Homecomers at the Pickaquoy Centre. A splendid evening was had by all. It was good to see lots of young Canadian children with surnames of Marwick, Louttit, Garson and Clouston stand up and play Orcadian tunes with Orcadian children. We had another Homecoming in 2007 and again it was a great success.

Over the years we have had lots of annual outings and have visited most of the Orkney Islands. We also had a day trip over to the Castle of Mey. For me one of the best outings was our trip over to Papa Stronsay to meet Father Michael Mary and hear about the monks of the Transalpine Redemptorists way of life. We also presented them with census prints of Stronsay to show them who had lived on Papa Stronsay before them. Father Michael Mary explained to us that his ancestors had come from Orkney and had emigrated to New Zealand.

I have been on a great many other trips and events which I could tell you about but most of them have already been reported on in our Sib Folk News magazine over the years.

You will find me, most afternoons, at the Orkney Family History Society office on the first floor of the Orkney Library in Junction Road, Kirkwall. Although my official designation with the society is treasurer, the research side of family history has always fascinated me and I have over the past twenty years I would like to think that my colleagues and I have helped hundreds of members get closer to their Orkney roots. My own roots are Orcadian through and through and during a lifetime in the islands I have acquired a plethora of useful (and useless) information about the people and places of Orkney. I was born in the island of Shapinsay in 1951 where my parents owned the farm of Quoymorehouse. My father was Robert John Gilmour Gray and he was born at Gill in Westray in 1914. My mother was Mary Manson Brown and she was born at Nether Feuld in Westray in 1914. They were married in 1940 in Westray and went to farm at the Glebe in Shapinsay before moving to Quoymorehouse in 1950.

Father was one of the best Stack builders in the island and farmers used to drive around the island to see who built the best stacks. He was also very good at ploughing with the horse. When I was young we had two large Clydesdale horses that father used for farm work. In 1957 he was first on the island for Horse Ploughing and won a medal from the Royal Highland & Agricultural Society of Scotland. He was possibly the last person to win a medal for Horse Ploughing in Scotland as all the other parishes had stopped Horse Ploughing matches by 1957 and that was the last one on Shapinsay.

My mother died in 1955 when I was only 4 leaving my father to bring up 4 children and run the farm. When I was 12 I went to Kirkwall to attend the Kirkwall Grammar School. As the children from Shapinsay could get home to Shapinsay each weekend we were not allowed to stay in the School Hostel and I stayed in Kirkwall in private lodgings. When my father was no longer fit to run the farm in 1966 I moved with him to Finstown and I continued at the Kirkwall Grammar School. As Finstown was not in the catchment area for Kirkwall I had to find my own transport into Kirkwall each day. After a few days of travelling from Finstown by bus my French teacher, Mrs Ethel Twatt said that she would be delighted to take me to and from school with her each day as it would save me paying bus fares. I was delighted to accept her kind invitation. She did not want the other school children to know that she was taking me in to school and I had to promise her I would not tell them. Every morning she would park in Castle Street across from the Clydesdale Bank and I would have to get out of the car and walk up the Strynd to school on my own and she would walk up a few steps behind me. When I left school Mrs Twatt continued to take me in to work until I could afford a car of my own. She was a very kind lady.

When I left school I went to work in the Clydesdale Bank before going to work for the Orkney Islands Council where I worked for the next 33 years in the Finance Department. In 1978 I got married to Elaine who had come to Orkney to teach. Our daughter Lynn was born in 1979 and our son Steven was born in 1982. We were delighted that they both attended Edinburgh University and both came back to live in Orkney.

I took early retirement in 2004 to spend more time in the Orkney Family History Society office as I was doing the research for the Society by that time due to the sudden death of Janice Sinclair. Janice had done the research since the Society had started up. Janice was another person who had done so much to make the Society a success. I have enjoyed doing the research and it makes me feel like a detective and I find it very difficult to give up when I can’t find a person or a family that I am looking for.

One of the most common things I hear visitors say is that they wished they had listened to the stories told by their older relatives. I was one who did listen and noted all stories told by my older relatives especially stories told by my Dad or by my maternal grandmother who lived in Sanday. She came to visit us quite often after our mother died. My father used to tell me of stories about
his 4 grand uncles who had been lighthouse keepers all over Scotland in the late 1800s and of other ancestors emigrating to farm in Canada and Australia. My grandmother would tell me stories of her granduncles going from Westray to Australia in the 1840s to prospect for gold and then moving on to New Zealand. She also told stories of the Trailis of Holland. Her grandmother Isabella Traill was a daughter of George Traill of Holland who was a son of Thomas Traill and Anne Stewart. Anne Stewart was of course directly descended from the Stewart Earls. My grandmother was a direct descendant of Robert Stewart, Earl of Orkney, brother of Mary Queen of Scots.

I have made lots of friends from the many members and visitors who have found their way to our offices over the years. Most are from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA and they all have one aim in mind—to discover every scrap of knowledge about their Orcadian forebears. I have heard some fantastic tales, been asked some really strange questions and encountered some uncanny coincidences. Some of these I thought I would share with you in this special anniversary issue.

1. There are coincidences that crop up the whole time when doing family history research. One day I had arranged to meet Elizabeth and Ian Ogston from Australia. They had planned a trip to Orkney and Elizabeth’s cousin David Rendall in Australia had asked them to come in and visit me when they were in Orkney. I had helped him with his research into Rendalls from Westray a few years earlier. They did call in to see me and I showed them the research I had done into their Rendalls and Munros from Westray. They asked me why I have so much information on the family and I explained I had done it first of all for our member Alexandra Richter from Vancouver Island who was descended from the same family. I explained that Mrs Richter would be their 3rd cousin. I told them how the gravestone for their ancestors mentioned that one of the Munros had lived in Russia and had worked for the Tsar of Russia back in the 1860s. When they left the office I was sitting thinking that it was sometime since Mrs Richter had visited from Canada when the door opened and in she walked. I could hardly believe that it was her. I asked her if she had met a lady in the corridor and she said that they had smiled to each other. I explained how the lady was her 3rd cousin from Australia. She went downstairs and they met up but could hardly believe that they were both in Orkney and in the Library at the same time.

2. Another strange case I had was when Ruth Lacey from Prince Edward Island visited back in 2006. She had sent me an email to say that she was to visit Orkney and that her ancestors had been Jean and Margaret Rendall from Orkney. I had always dreaded getting an enquiry about Rendalls as there were so many of them in Orkney. Ruth had worked with our member Dutch Thomson in Prince Edward Island. Dutch’s ancestors were Thomsons from Papa Westray. I had met Dutch when he visited Orkney and when I got the request for help from Ruth with such little information on her ancestors I was sure that Dutch had put her up to it to see how good I was at research, as Ruth had said she was sorry for having such little information especially with Rendall being the 5th most common surname in the census and almost every family having a Jean and a Mary. I told her that I had found a couple of families that could be her ancestors. When I explained about John Rendall and his wife Euphemia Baikie from Heatherhouse in Tankerness having daughters, called Jean and Mary, Ruth became quite excited when I mentioned the surname Baikie and was moved to tears as she realised that this was indeed her relatives as her uncle had Baikie as a middle name but she had not realised that this was an Orkney surname. Ruth then told me that she had brought her mother’s ashes to Orkney to scatter on her great grandparents graves.

It was agreed that I would pick her up from the OFHS office the next day and take her out to see her ancestors graves in the graveyard at the Hall of Tankerness. Before we left she asked a strange request. She asked if she could have a spoon. I got her a spoon from the kitchen and we set off for Tankerness. I thought she was perhaps going to have something to eat and needed a spoon and I never thought any more about the spoon.

When we got to the graveyard and I showed her the grave I said I would go and leave her as she was quite emotional. I walked away some distance and looked around to see her digging a small hole on top of her great great grandparents graves. Ruth was digging the hole with the spoon which I had given her. She then poured in her mother’s ashes into the hole.

On the way back into Kirkwall she explained that she had taken her mother’s ashes into the country in a Maple Syrup jar. When I dropped her off in Kirkwall she opened her bag and I saw 2 identical jars of Maple Syrup. She took one out and gave it to me as a gift for helping her to find her Orkney ancestors. On the way home I was hoping that she had given me the jar that contained Maple Syrup and not the one that had carried her mother’s ashes!

3. In 1997 Darryl Adams from British Columbia visited Orkney and discovered that his grandfather Alexander Voy had won a Ba’ in the Mens Christmas Day Ba’ here in Kirkwall in 1910. Darryl came back to Orkney and played in the Mens Ba’ on Christmas Day 2010, 100 years after his grandfather had played in the Ba’. However Darryl did not win a Ba’.

4. Back in 2002 our member Thelma Bremer from Australia asked me to see what I could find about her father Charles Findlay’s childhood days in Orphir before he emigrated to Australia. She was delighted when I found that her father had been 3rd in the thread and needle race at the Orphir Picnic back in 1923.

5. One day in 2009 I got a telephone call from a lady who was coming to research her Irvine ancestors from Birsay and wanted to arrange a meeting with me. Her name was Jane Shafto. I asked her when she would be arriving in Orkney and she asked me to hold on a minute until she asked her husband and I heard her say “Bobby when does the boat get into Orkney?” I then realised that her husband was called Bobby Shafto and I could remember the...
Billy Cardno, who has been with the OFHS since it was formed, was always amazed at the number of times a visitor turned out to be related to the person on duty. Little chance of that happening to me, thought Billy. His family are Drevers from the tiny Orkney island of Pharay, just 1.5 miles long and .25miles wide and as the last inhabitants left in 1947 they are now thin on the ground.

One day, however, in July 2015 Billy was on duty when an American lady came into the office looking for help as she was researching ‘the Drevers of Pharay’. When Billy got over that shock and got busy on the computer he could hardly believe it when he discovered that their grandparents, three times removed, were brothers. The lady certainly had a tale to tell when she got home. Not only did she acquire lots of family information but she discovered a real live Orcadian connection.

Now they both have a great ‘family history’ story to tell and as Billy says ‘I still haven’t recovered’.

Naming of Children: Our ancestors often used the following naming procedure when picking out a name for a child. Watching for these patterns can help in your research. Of course, it is not always as listed below:

1st Son = father’s father
2nd Son = mother’s father
3rd Son = father
4th Son = father’s oldest brother
5th Son = mother’s oldest brother or mother’s oldest brother
1st Dau = mother’s mother
2nd Dau = father’s mother
3rd Dau = mother
4th Dau = mother’s oldest sister
5th Dau = mother’s oldest sister or father’s oldest sister

Our Gilmour Family Heirloom

We have a few family heirlooms that have been passed down from my Granny Gray’s family. One of them, a silver bangle, engraved JW to MG. My granny was Margaret Gilmour and her father John Gilmour was a lightkeeper all his life. Here he is with the ‘bike he never rode’. We often wondered why he had a bike when he was the keeper on Helier Holm as the road from the lighthouse was too poor to ride upon. During his time on the lighthouses he helped to save 92 people from 13 ships. When he was on the Pentland Skerries he helped to save many lives including 12 from the Vicksburg which was sailing from Leith when it went on the Pentland Skerries in 1884. One of the men he saved from the Vicksburg came back to visit him a few years later when he was stationed at Kinnaird Head. The man had come to thank John Gilmour for saving his life and presented my Granny, who was a young girl at the time, with the silver bangle. We always realised that the MG was for my grandmother Margaret Gilmour and often wondered about the JW.

It was at Christmas 2002 I got a present of the book A Wild and Open Sea – The Story of the Pentland Firth by James Miller from Caithness. In it it explains that the Vicksburg had 21 of a crew when she went aground on the Muckle Skerry on 17th July 1884. The crew took to the 2 lifeboats but the Captain stayed probably intending to go down with his ship. However before the ship went down the Captain was swept away by a big wave. When he was in the water one of the lightkeepers had thrown him a rope but he was too exhausted to hold on to it. The lightkeeper then shouted to the Captain to take the rope in his teeth which he did and he was pulled to safety. I assume that the lightkeeper must have been my great grandfather John Gilmour and the Captain was John Watson. It had taken the family over a hundred years to find out who the JW on the bangle was.
At the AGM in 2007 the Society got a very informative talk from Lucy. She is the Assistant Archivist in the Orkney Library & Archive. Although not Orcadian herself, she came to us from Dumfries, she now knows more about Orkney than many Orcadians. Her brother, Bob Gibbon, settled in Orkney before she did and he now has an Orcadian wife, Sarah Jane, and two Orcadian children. The Gibbons are making an impact on Orkney!

With the aid of a photographic PowerPoint presentation, she took us on a virtual conducted tour of the Archive searchroom and strongrooms. On entering the Archive searchroom you are welcomed by one of two archive staff at the reception desk. You present your requests and queries and are shown or accompanied to the source from where your answers will come.

Handwritten documents also on microfilm include the Old Parish Registers, 19th century Census Returns, early Valuation Rolls 1855-1904 and the Orkney and Shetland America 1887-1895 and the Orkney Blast 1941-1944.

In the other part of the searchroom are tables to work at and shelves containing reference books, graveyard surveys, valuation roll books, sasine abridgements, Ordnance Survey maps and microfiche copies of the IGI.

If a researcher requires more material than is lodged in the searchrooms he/she can look at an archive computer database which lists the catalogued entries of over 140 large archive collections and over 1200 small archive collections, currently in excess of 59,000 entries. Once the researcher finds an item to view he/she enters the reference number on an order slip and asks a member of staff to retrieve it for them.

These archive collections are stored in four large strongrooms along the corridor. Each strongroom is named after prominent local people or places. Wallace is named after the Rev. James Wallace, Minister of Kirkwall.
Church Records

and author of an early Description of Orkney published in 1693.

It was no surprise then to hear that this room contains precious Orkney church records and other institutions such as Sheriff Court commissary records back to 1839, Civil Court processes back to 1561, Local Authority records including Education records and Customs & Excise records including information on whisky distilleries and shipping.

The next strongroom has the honourable name of Baikie on its door and is named after William Baikie who bequeathed his personal collection of books to the Publick Bibliothec of Kirkwall in 1683. This was Scotland’s first Public Library and has developed into the Orkney Library & Archive we enjoy today. This strongroom is filled with bequests and gifts from the people of Orkney and beyond. There are collections of archive items from businesses, land-owners estates, individuals, local historians, artists, wartime historians and genealogists. Quite a large part of the room has special storage for maps and plans.

The third strongroom has another famous name, Laing. It was named after the street in which the old Carnegie library building stands. The Orkney Library and Archive moved to its present building in 2003. This strongroom holds the Archive’s collection of Oral and Photographic media. It has Radio Orkney programmes and the irreplaceable Ernest Marwick recordings. It also serves as the Photo Archive store. Here there are in excess of 60,000 photos including many from famous local photographers such as Tom Kent, Robert Robertson, William Hourston, William Wood, David Horne, Wilfred Marr and Dougie Shearer.

The fourth strongroom is where all the “new” archive collections are stored until they are fully catalogued and available for the public to view. It is named Hamnavoe after the harbour in Stromness, where new goods arrive in the County everyday.

All the strongrooms have suitably controlled temperature and air-conditioning.

Back in the main searchroom one goes left to enter The Orkney Room, the local studies area. Here you can find many published books and periodicals about Orkney and also many books that have been written by Orcadians. This includes a fiction section. In fact it must be a close second to the National Library of Scotland as holder of the greatest number of books relating to Orkney.

Alan Clouston, our chairman in 2007 when this talk was originally given, thanked Lucy for her ‘brilliant introduction to a veritable treasure house of genealogical sources’. Members left the meeting making plans to make more use of the facilities in the future and now that you know more about this wonderful facility Lucy hopes that you will do likewise.

More information, including current opening hours can be found on the Archives page of the website at www.orkneylibrary.org.uk
In early April 2006 I had the privilege of visiting Orkney and giving a short presentation to members and guests from the Orkney Family History Society. Nan Scott organized the evening and kindly hosted my visit to Kirkwall. I had a wonderful time meeting many people and visiting places which were of great interest to me as I had read about them in Hudson’s Bay Company records.

The purpose of the presentation was to look at documents which would assist researchers in adding information to their ancestral charts and gather personal details on their ancestors.

For decades documents relating to employees working for the Hudson’s Bay Company were gathered at posts in Canada, the Winnipeg headquarters and the London Office in Fenchurch Street.

The fur traders were men hired by the Company to work in North America. The Company focused upon gathering furs and transporting them to London and Europe for sale. From the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century the majority of workers were engaged from: Orkney; Shetland; mainland Scotland; Isle of Lewis; Eastern Canada. Fewer employees originated from the rest of the British Isles; Scandinavia; Europe and Hawaii. Employees were called Servants and they were labourers, semi-skilled craftsmen, tradesmen, educated accountants and surgeon clerks. Some officers responsible for directing the work of the servants were educated in Britain and could have entered the Company as a clerk.

The Hudson’s Bay Company Archives has an excellent website http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/ which gives an overview of records held at the Archives. Posts where servants boarded are illustrated on maps and detailed entries identifying the microfilm numbers for each time period can be checked on the website. Copies of some microfilms may also be consulted at:

- Orkney Archives
- National Archives, Kew

The HBCA will send copies of microfilm records to research centres through interlibrary loan or a researcher can be hired to check the information in Winnipeg. Canadian photo-copies are a fraction of the cost of those in the British Isles.

To begin the search it is recommended that a skeletal summary of the life of the servant or officer be prepared. The first step would be to check his name in the:

- Biogs. [Biographies]
- Search File
- Private Records
- Servants’ Contracts
- Post Record

Biogs
These records were initiated by Judith Hudson Beattie, a Keeper of the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives. These are one-two page summaries of the life of a fur trader or employee of the HBC. Biogs. are now on-line and they can be accessed through the HBCA website. A typical example could indicate:

- Birthplace/birthdate
- Home parish
- When first employed
- Chronological history of the employee’s work centres giving Dates
- References to documents
- Date individual retired or left the service
- Pension if granted • Date of death
- Additional information on wife and children

Not all employees have a Biog., only those whose life with the Company has been researched by staff.

Search File
This can only be searched at the Archives in Winnipeg. It contains papers relating to individuals, posts, places etc. The information in each file may span decades of time and the contents may contain photocopies of printed articles from journals or slips of referenced comments. Sometimes there are pages of information from family members who have researched their ancestors.

Private Records
There are a few hundred private records. They contain a miscellany of information sometimes generated from the individual fur trader himself or from researchers.
investigating his life. Many files contain copies of company documents.

**Servants’ Contracts**

Thousands of documents are held by the HBCA and they can be consulted on microfilm at various centres. The surviving documents date from 1776-1926. Contracts before 1776 cannot be located but references to their existence can be found. After 1926 employees’ personal details are held in individual personnel dossiers. A database summarizing the information in all the contracts is in the process of preparation and it is hoped it will be accessible on the HBCA website sometime in the near future.

**Some Fur Trade Records to Assist Researchers**

These records include:

• Servants’ Contracts
• Application for Employment
• Account Ledgers
• Evaluation Forms
• Record of Service
• Celebrations
• Newsletters
• Pension Records
• Wills & Estate Records………

Not all documents exist for earlier time periods but this list offers some suggestions on various records which might be consulted. Examples from this list of records were illustrated in the presentation and it is possible to trace the careers of fur traders through these records. When a successful search has been made a person may locate the following information on his ancestor:

• Birthdate/birthplace
• Date contract(s) were signed
• Capacity or occupation
• Annual salary throughout his career
• HBC posts where the fur trader served
• The personal evaluations from his superiors
• Purchases in the Company’s trading posts, and much more…..

Sometimes brothers worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company in North America or two or three generations in one family worked for the Company. Their careers can be checked through archival records. For example, **James Flett** from Birsay, Orkney entered service 7 December 1846. After working as a fur trader throughout his career he retired from the Company and settled in Manitoba. James Flett died 31 December 1906. His son **Alexander Flett** worked for the Company and he was followed by his son **Horace Flett**. Horace had fourteen children and served the Hudson’s Bay Company for many years. He died in 1992 but his family roots are linked to Orkney and the careers of these three men can be traced through archival documents.

Around 1815 new immigrants arrived at York Factory and Churchill. They moved south to the area which is known as the Red River Settlement where they were able to purchase land. Many families originated from Scotland and numerous people came from Orkney. One settler found in the census of 1827 was **James Selater** from Orkney who set up his home along the Red River. Numerous census returns were taken in Manitoba between 1827 and 1870 and they are indexed and available in the Archives. Not only can the census returns identify Orcadians but it is possible to locate the land which was granted to the settler.

Medical journals add interest and personal details on our ancestors which are not always available through other sources. Some of them survive and are found amongst the records held for each post. They offer insight into the clinical skills, diseases and treatments of the time. **William Snellie**, an Edinburgh trained doctor from Tankerness kept meticulous patient records and these offer details on the health of the inhabitants of York Factory and the travelers through York Factory in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Hudson’s Bay Company Archives offers a unique collection of records which give fascinating details on the life of employees of the Company. These details are unique and it is unlikely they could be obtained from other sources.

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This little gem from **Peter Leith**, member No 65 is certainly worth retelling

_I was told this story, writes Peter, by my father-in-law H.W. Leash who, I think, got it from the man concerned._

An Orkney sea captain (name forgotten) was in a South American port shortly after the end of WW1 and went ashore for a meal different from ship’s food.

He went to a hotel and the dining room was full except for a table with one man at it. He asked if he might join him and the man agreed. They soon got talking and it turned out that the other man was also a sea captain—a German.

Conversation flowed and the war was soon mentioned. The German said that he had been in the submarine service and furthermore his area of patrol was off Orkney. He went on to say that at times of suitable weather and tide on a Friday, he would put two English speaking men ashore at Birsay where they went to Oag’s van and bought eggs and groceries.

An impossible story? Perhaps—but Oag’s van was always in that area on a Friday evening and at that time there were so many strange workmen on Orkney that a different accent would cause no one any surprise.
**Bloody Orkney**

This bloody town's a bloody cuss,
No bloody trains, no bloody bus,
And no one cares for bloody us,
Oh bloody Orkney!

The bloody roads are bloody bad,
The bloody folk are bloody mad,
They'd make the brightest body sad,
Oh bloody Orkney!

All bloody clouds, all bloody rain,
No bloody kerbs, no bloody drains—
The Council's got no bloody brains,
Oh bloody Orkney!

Everything's so bloody dear,
A bloody bob for bloody beer,
And is it good?—no bloody fear!
Oh bloody Orkney!

The bloody flics are bloody old,
The bloody seats are always sold,
You can't get in for bloody gold,
Oh bloody Orkney!

The bloody dances make you smile,
The bloody band is bloody vile,
It only cramps your bloody style,
Oh bloody Orkney!

No bloody sport, no bloody games,
No bloody fun with bloody dames,
Won't even give their proper names,
Oh bloody Orkney!

Best bloody place is bloody bed,
With bloody ice on bloody head,
You might as well be bloody dead,
Oh bloody Orkney!

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**Kirkwallian's Lament**

*By Captain Hamish Blair*

This bloody war's a bloody cuss
For what it brought to bloody us,
Such bloody trouble, bloody fuss,
Oh bloody, bloody!

The Navy takes the bloody bun,
With gold braid by the bloody ton,
This bloody town they try to run
Oh bloody, bloody!

They commandeer each bloody hall,
And at their bloody beck and call,
They want us, one and bloody all,
Oh bloody, bloody!

Strutting around like bloody hens
Supercilious bloody Wrens
Can scarcely push their bloody pens,
Oh bloody, bloody!

Our soldiers, so called bloody gay,
With two and bloody six a day,
Their bloody looks keep Huns away
Oh bloody, bloody!

Brass hats by the bloody score,
Drink their pay and shout for more,
No wonder poor Tommy's sore
Oh bloody, bloody!

Immaculate bloody Glamour Boys
In Smoky Blue, like bloody toys,
Parade with studied bloody poise,
Oh bloody, bloody!

Despite all benefits bestowed,
Those bloody forces write an ode,
To ridicule our beloved abode,
Oh bloody, bloody!

Wish this bloody war was o'er,
We'll bound them from our bloody shore,
And live in peace for evermore,
Oh bloody, bloody

---

**Hell's Bells**

*By Captain Hamish Blair*

The bloody sassenachs have come,
With bugle call and tuck o’ drum,
With smell of beer and Army rum,
The cheeky sods!
What right have they to criticise,
Who blow their trumpets to the skies,
But all our folk and homes despise
The bloody clods!

We love the winds, we like the rains,
We DO have kerbs, we do have drains,
We have no trams or railway trains,
But ships and luggers,
Oh could we hear the farewell knell,
Of old St Magnus Church's bell,
To send them all to bloody hell,
The cocky buggars!

---

The following is the reply of an Orcadian typist to a serviceman who asked her to type 'Life in the Orkneys' for him

Returned herewith your bloody rot,
And what a bloody nerve you've got.
Get a bloody Southerener to type
Your bloody, bloody awful tripe,
Remember I'm Orcadian, buddy,
And proud of it too.
Oh bloody, bloody!
1997 - 2017 Twenty memorable years of the Orkney Family History Society

We didn’t know we were making memories, we just knew we were having fun.
Membership of the Orkney Family History Society is the gateway to successfully researching your Orcadian background and heritage. While it is great to be ‘on site’ in our office in Kirkwall, our extensive website provides ‘remote’ access to an unrivalled wealth of indispensable resources exclusive to the Society to help you fill in the blanks.

The main purpose of our website is to provide all members with a convenient way to access our resources from anywhere in the world and the transcribing and scanning of documents and photographs and updating of material is an ongoing project to ensure that the most up-to-date material is available. The website also allows members to update their own contact details, state their research interests and to make contact with other members with similar interests. A message board is also available for queries and answers. While many members make extensive use of the website we know that many may not be as familiar with it and we hope that this brief overview will show them just how easily the site can be navigated.

**OPEN YOUR WEB BROWSER**

Type in www.orkneyfhs.co.uk and the following page will open.

**LOG IN**

At the top right click on “Log In” and the following page will open. Type in your membership number and password. If you have lost or forgotten your password complete the request at the bottom of the page and we will contact you by email.

Once you have correctly entered your membership number all the facilities of the website are available to you. Click ‘Log In” and the “HOME” page will open. Clicking on any of the boxes in this column will open that resource page and the particular facilities offered under each of these headings.

The home page also shows words highlighted in blue. Clicking on any blue words on the website will LINK you with something.

**RESOURCES**

The main resources listed in the left hand column are:-

- Birth, Marriage & Death Records, Census Returns, Burial/Gravestone Transcripts and other Family Trees.

The Society has a wealth of other resource material and is constantly adding new records and articles relating to people in Orkney.

**SEARCHING**

Searching our resources is mainly done by entering a surname into a search box to view a list of records that match the search criteria. These lists will show, or have a link to the transcript and, where possible, the document itself which can usually be downloaded.

**SEARCH TIP**

The searches are not case sensitive but do look for an exact match. To get round this you can use wildcards in the search name or phrase to include the spelling variations. The “?” represents any single character and the “*” represents any number of characters.

For example: to find all Grey/Gray type Gr?y.

To find all Loutit/Lutit/Louttit/Loutitt use L*tit*
**MEMBERS PAGE**

When you click on the Members Page you can access each of the 5 headings along the top of this page. Let us look at these individually.

**CONTACTS**

Click on this and the drop-down menu reveals the users email app for communicating with the relevant section of the Orkney Family History Society.

**MY DETAILS**

This is where members can check or update their own details including changing their password. Members can state their preferences:

- **Publish their details in the online Directory** (see Members’ Directory).
- **Indicate whether willing to do research**; allow the Society to contact them to see if they can help with a particular research enquiry.
- **Opt out of receiving the paper copy of Sib Folk News** (all issues can now be viewed online).
- **Record the surnames they are researching** (see Members’ Directory).

**MEMBERS’ DIRECTORY**

- This page allows members to search by Name or Membership Number for another member and display their contact details.
- List all the members who have an interest in a particular surname.

Members who have stated NO to publishing their details in the Directory will not appear in any of the searches.

**WHAT’S ON**

Shows the current programme of the Society’s meetings/Talks.

**THE SOCIETY**

Lists the Committee members and where one can view or download the Constitution.

**THE MESSAGE BOARD**

If you are needing assistance with your research or have ‘hit a brick wall’ then post a message on the website and some other member will often come to your assistance.

You can use the message board for just about anything: comments regarding the website, our magazine, useful websites you have found or the Society in general.

If you are interested in seeing messages relating to a particular surname you can set a filter by clicking on the blue link “See the options for searching the messages” and this box will appear. The content of all Posts and Responses will be searched and only relevant messages will be displayed. The search is not restricted to surnames; you can put any word or phrase into the “Surname Box”.

**BMD’s, STRAYS, etc. Events**

This is a database of recorded events, something which occurred on a particular date, typically a birth, marriage or death, but can be anything such as a newspaper article, or census record for a “Stray” (living away from Orkney).

**SEARCHING**

The names of all the people in the record are indexed and can be searched for, either as an individual or just by the surname. In the above example we have used wildcards in the surname and the results can be viewed to check for possible spelling variations. You can click on the names in the index to show all the records containing this surname. Additionally, you can search for a name/word/phrase occurring within the Title or Description of the event.
RECORDING EVENTS
The Society is constantly acquiring new BMD certificates while undertaking research for members and these are made available to all our members by uploading them to the website. These certificates need to be transcribed and any member is able to help the Society by recording the details on the Document. Click on the blue “update the records” link on the BMD page and proceed as follows:

Open the document by clicking on “view doc”, check which Entry No the template is for and enter the details into the form. (Basically just enter the correct date and replace .. with the relevant data.) All the names on the document should be copied into the table. Finally click the [Save Changes] button.

CENSUS
Every Orkney Census from 1841 - 1911 has been transcribed and can be searched online. These also include some returns for 1821. Searches are by name or you can search for a property name.

The website has different search methods available. All the results allow you to see full details of the individuals and have links to see further details. The surname index is useful for identifying unusual spelling variations of a name.

UPLOADING PHOTOS
Click on PHOTOS in left hand column, then on blue ‘upload your photo’ and the following panel appears. Insert details to complete. Only JPG images can be accepted and should be less than 1Mb. Resize if necessary.

PHOTOS
You can access an assortment of photos submitted or donated to the Society. These will generally be of people but could also include photos of properties where their ancestors had lived. Click PHOTOS in the left hand column and on the panel that appears insert your requirements. If we use our n?rq* example the following panel will open showing what is available.
MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS

An ongoing project of the Society is the surveying, recording and photographing of all the Orkney gravestones and monumental inscriptions. The status of each of the gravesites is shown on the website and inscriptions are available for searching as soon as they have been recorded, together with links to view the photograph if it has been taken. If the survey has been completed there will be a link to view this.

If a photo of the gravestone has been taken an icon will appear as above. Click to view. Right click over image to download and ‘save image as’.

RESOURCES

Description of all the research material and resources held by the Society has been created together with an index of surnames referenced in the documents. Where feasible these have been transcribed and uploaded for website viewing.

If you follow our example for Birsay, when you click on ‘by parish’ you will get some idea of the amount of material which can be available: Family Histories and Surnames, BMDs including burials and MIs, Kirk Records, Land/Property - Rental/Valuation Lists, Wills, Testaments, School Records, Armed Forces, etc. etc. The index can also be searched for a particular surname to produce a list of documents with references to that surname. The list of resources does not include resources which have their own section on the website.

Where a resource has been transcribed and or uploaded to the website then a Title of the resource will be in blue and can be clicked to view the document.

Click on SIB FOLK NEWS and you have access to every copy of the Society’s quarterly magazine—all 80 copies of them. They are all readable online as PDF files or you can download by clicking on the blue issue number.

A brief description for every article is recorded and an index created for any surnames mentioned. You will see two search boxes on this panel. Complete with either a surname or a word or phrase to find any material relating to your search. Using our n?q* example again brings up a wealth of material where the name Norquoy or a variation will appear in one form or another.
New members of the Orkney Family History Society are asked to provide a basic family tree and the Society now holds over 2000 trees submitted by members or donated. These ‘Office Trees’ are only available for viewing by members visiting the office so the Society is scanning them and uploading to the website for all members to view.

The ‘Office Trees’ will only be up-to-date on the day that they were handed in to the Society so members are encouraged to create and maintain their own basic (ancestral) tree on-line.

‘Office Trees’ are indexed by surname only but On-Line trees can be searched for an individual. Searching for “alex n?rq* (using wildcards to find the spelling variations) produces the following result. If the Name or Description is blue then the tree can be viewed.

Members can create multiple on-line trees and a user-guide is available on the TREES page if help required.

One day, while Morag Sinclair was on duty an Orcadian member dropped in. She explained that she was from a very small family. She had no cousins in this country and her only possible relatives were in the USA. If there existed they would be descendants of her father’s uncle who had emigrated in the late 19th century. He had been last heard of in Louisiana, and had had a daughter late in life. Nothing more was known and because she was a daughter, the family name would disappear if and when she was married.

Not a lot to go on but Morag got started and found the daughter and that she had indeed married. Now Morag had a surname to work with and further investigation produced an obituary for the husband and unbelievably his funeral was taking place that very day. Even stranger was the fact that taking into account the time difference it was probably taking place at that exact moment. The obituary was a very long one, giving full family details. At the end there was an email address so now there was a means of contact. The member did so and eventually received a reply from her second cousin and they are now in regular contact.

Morag tells me that coincidences happen quite often. One day a lady came into the office and showed George an old photo. When Morag overheard the name of her family home mentioned she looked at the photo and realised that it was her great/ great grandparents.

‘Hello, I’m your cousin’ Morag said to an astonished lady. A visit to the family home and graveyard where their forebears are buried was the highlight of the holiday. Now they keep in touch as if they had always known each other. How strange she came in when Morag was on duty.
Ever thought of publishing a book of your family history?

Why publish your family history?
It is an extremely satisfying feeling to see the result of all your investigative work on your family history published in a hardback book or as a colourful chart. Not only do you get the satisfaction of seeing your family history research published, it is also a great gift item for family members and other relatives. Family history research can be an expensive business and often the information is hidden away in a computer or in a box. Publishing a book is a good method of producing something that you can share with other family members, and can make the expense more justifiable. If your family is planning a reunion or there is a special family event coming up, such as an important anniversary, what could be better than to be able to give relatives a professionally printed copy of the family history.

How much will it cost?
People who want to publish a book ask that simple question first—but there is no simple answer. It depends on many options. The two most important factors are: how many pages and how many copies do you want to print? It depends on what you supply to the printer and bookbinder. A complete document in PDF format with all the photos, text etc. in place will be a lot less costly than supplying a pile of hand written pages that the printer will need to typeset, and a pile of old photographs that will need to be scanned. The most common and best method is to use genealogy software to compile your family tree. There are many good programs available, mostly inexpensive and some free. These programs can store your data, photographs, certificates and produce a print ready document. Specialist genealogy printers can print straight from these files or, those who are conversant with GEDCOMs can send the printer a GEDCOM and any extra data that you might want included such as family group photos, montages, charts, maps etc. The cost per book reduces dramatically when multiple copies are ordered. Other family members may want to be involved or be interested in ordering copies, or you might wish to distribute as gifts.

When to publish your story
When should you put your tree into print? The answer is anytime you want – what you will be publishing is your family tree, edition one. You could decide to do this every ten years or so, a reasonable period to have added enough new data to justify making the last edition redundant. Some will feel that their research has not yet been completed and if you are a seasoned genealogist you will know that your task will never be finished. You can go further back, dig deeper into detail and of course, hopefully new descendants will be born to justify all the effort you have put into your enterprise. If you follow that route you shall never publish a book.

How much effort will it take?
Like most things in life, the more you put into it the better the result and publishing a family history book is no different. You could just produce a list of names and dates, although anyone reading that would quickly lose interest. Yes - a good family history book should contain all the names, births, marriages, deaths & places where they occurred, however, by including biographies, photographs, articles on the history about the places your ancestors lived and worked and a myriad of other possibilities, your book will become a treasured possession. Source citations are an essential part of any family book, to both provide credibility to your research and leave a trail that others can follow to verify your findings.

Professional publication
An alternative is to get a specialist company to produce the complete book. The benefit of this route is that experts will be handling many aspects of your publication and the end result will be a more professional finish. Items that you may overlook such as good typography, colour, cover design, etc. will be taken care of by them.

10 Steps to Publishing Your Family History
Producing a family history book may seems too daunting to be fun, but don’t lose heart – try these 10 steps for making your family history book a reality.

1. What do you envisage for your family history project?
   • A simple photocopied booklet shared only with immediate family?
   • A hard-bound book to serve as a reference for other genealogists?
   • A hard-bound book that forms a complete record of your family history, once you feel your research is more-or-less complete?

This publication shall become a family heirloom and a hard-bound book is more practical than a paperback that is unlikely to stand the test of time.

Considering your interests, potential audience and the types of materials you have to work with, here are some forms your family history can take:
   • Memoir/Narrative: A combination of story and personal experience, memoirs and narratives do not need to be all-inclusive or objective. Memoirs usually focus on a specific episode or time period in the life of a single ancestor, while a narrative generally encompasses a group of ancestors.
• Scrapbook or Album: If you’re fortunate enough to have a large collection of family photos and memorabilia, a scrapbook or photo album can be a fun way to tell your family’s story. Include your photos in chronological order and include stories, descriptions and family trees to complement the pictures.

Define the Scope of Your Family History

Do you intend to write mostly about just one particular relative, or everyone hanging from your family tree? As the author, you next need to choose a focus for your family history book. Some possibilities include:

• Ancestry of… - Begins with your generation or perhaps your children, and includes all ancestors. Each section would include all the ancestors in a particular generation.

• All Descendants of… - Begins with an individual or couple and covers all of their descendants, with chapters organized by generation. If you’re focusing your family history on an immigrant ancestor, this is a good way to go.

• Single Line of Descent - Begins with the earliest known ancestor for a particular surname and follows him/her through a single line of descent (to yourself, for example). Each chapter of your book would cover one ancestor or generation.

• The Grandparents - Includes a section on each of your four grandparents, or eight great-grandparents, or sixteen great, great grandparents if you are very ambitious. Each individual section focuses on one grandparent, and works backwards through their ancestry or forward from his/her earliest known ancestor.

• One Name Study – For those who are doing, or have researched a particular surname, publishing your results in a printed book that could be sold is an effective way of recovering part, or all of the costs of your work.

• One Village/Place Study – Similarly, for those who are doing or have researched a particular town or village, publishing your results in a printed book that could be sold can be an effective method of recovering part, or all of the costs of your work.

Again, these suggestions can easily be adapted to fit your interests, time and creativity. For example, you may choose to write a family history covering all people of a particular surname in a particular region, even if they aren’t all necessarily related to one another!

Set Deadlines You Can Live With

Even though you’ll likely find yourself scrambling to meet them, deadlines force you to complete each stage of your project.

Choose a Plot & Themes

Thinking of your ancestors as characters in your family history story, what problems and obstacles did your ancestors face? A plot gives your family history interest and focus. Popular family history plots and themes include:

• Immigration/Migration
• Rags to Riches, or Riches to Rags
• Pioneer, or Farm Life
• War Survival

Do Your Background Research

If you want your family history to read more like a suspense novel than a dull, dry textbook, then it is important to make the reader feel like an eyewitness to your family’s life. Even when your ancestor didn’t leave an account of his or her daily life, social histories can help you learn about the experiences of people in a given time and place. Read town and city histories to learn what life was like during your time period of interest. Research timelines of wars, natural disasters and epidemics to see if any might have influenced your ancestor. Investigate your ancestor’s occupation. Read up on the fashions, art, transportation and common foods of the time period and location. Interview all of your living relatives. Stories told in a relative’s own words will add a personal touch.

Organize Your Research

Create a timeline for each ancestor that you plan to write about. This will help you arrange the outline for your book, as well as spot any gaps in your research. Sort through the records and photos for each ancestor and identify the ones you’d like to include, making note of each on the timeline. Then use these timelines to help develop an outline for your narrative. You may choose to order your material in many different ways: chronologically, geographically, by character, or by theme.

Choose a Starting Point

What is the most interesting part of your family’s story? Did your ancestors escape a life of poverty and persecution for a better one in a new country? Was there an interesting invention or occupation? A war time hero? Pick out an interesting fact, and open your narrative with it. Just like the fiction books you read for pleasure, a family history book doesn’t need to begin at the beginning. An interesting story will grab the reader’s attention, with the hope of drawing them in past the first page.

Don’t be Afraid to Use Records and Documents

Diary entries, will excerpts, military accounts, obituaries and other records offer compelling, first-hand accounts of your family’s history - and you don’t even have to do the writing! Anything written directly by your ancestor is definitely worth including. Include short excerpts within the text of your writing, with source citations to point readers to the original record. Photos, pedigree charts, maps, birth, marriage, death certificates, census records and other illustrations can also add interest to a family history and help break up the writing into manageable chunks for the reader. Be sure to include detailed captions for any photos or illustrations that you incorporate.

Make it Personal

Anyone who reads your family history will likely be interested in the facts, but what they’ll most enjoy and remember are the everyday details - favourite stories and anecdotes, embarrassing moments and family traditions. Personal stories offer a great way to introduce new characters and chapters, and keep your reader interested. If your ancestors left no personal accounts, you can still tell their story as if they had, using what you’ve learned about them from your research.

Include an Index and Source Citations

Unless your family history is only a few pages in length, an index is a really important feature. This makes it much easier for the casual reader to find the portions of your book that detail the people in which they are interested. At the very least, try to include a surname index. Source citations are an essential part of any family book, to both provide credibility to your research, and to leave a trail that others can follow to verify your findings.

Now aren’t you just itching to get started?
‘Did You Know’ was a series of snippets about Orkney that I kept going from my first issue in 2004 before running out of steam in 2007. They eventually became too time consuming to research although I did learn a lot of odd things about Orkney and had fun with the graphics. I had hoped that members would provide enough material to help out but it was not to be. I thought that I would reprint a few of the more interesting in this issue as they will be new to most members. Ed

**Did you know** that in 1117 a blind farmer from Shetland had his sight miraculously restored after a vigil at the St Magnus shrine in Birsay? He was so impressed that when the Saint's bones were moved to St Olaf's in Kirkwall he again held a vigil after which his son was cured of leprosy. In view of the uncertainty which constantly surrounds the NHS this gem of knowledge might prove useful in the future.

**Did you know** that the first civilian killed in WW2 was James Isbister who died when a German plane jetisoned its bombs over the Brigg o’ Waithe in Stenness on the 16th March 1940? The farm buildings and the houses nearby were also the first buildings to be hit in an enemy attack on Britain. The first German plane to be shot down in Britain was on the island of Hoy when an Orkney anti-aircraft gunner brought down the Junkers 88 on the 17th October 1939. Both of these incidents resulted from the Luftwaffe attacking the British naval base of Scapa Flow where just days earlier HMS Royal Oak had been torpedoed by the U47.

**Did you know** that James Petrie Chalmers of Tankerness, Orkney was mourned by the greats of the movie industry when he died. James started his working life as an apprentice printer with the Orkney Herald. As a young man he emigrated to the USA and in New York in 1907 he published the world’s first film magazine ‘Movie Picture Maker’. He was instrumental in transforming the cinema from a sideshow attraction to a popular form of entertainment. He succeeded in stopping Thomas Edison from placing restrictive restraints on the film industry that would have prevented the medium being made available to wide audiences. He died at the age of 46 in a tragic accident when he fell down a liftshaft in Ohio.

**Did you know** that there is a sinister relic in the south triforium of the nave in St Magnus Cathedral – a hangman’s double ladder? This is another relic from the cathedral’s grisly past along with its dungeon ‘Marwicks Hole’ where prisoners were deposited via a shute and kept in total darkness with no outlet for escape. One side of the double ladder is more worn than the other as one side was one way only. The ladder was used at the gallows which was situated at the top of the Clay Loan in Kirkwall – an area that is now a flower bed.
Did you know that the last execution in Orkney took place in 1728 when a young Shapinsay girl, Marjory Meason, was hanged at Kirkwall for what was called ‘child murder’? Part of the minute of council reads Marjory Meason is discerned and adjudged to be taken from the Tolbooth in Kirkwall upon Wednesday 4th day of December next to come to the common place of execution to be hanged by the neck upon a gibbet of execution to be hanged come to the common place 4th day of December next to in Kirkwall upon Wednesday be taken from the Tolbooth discerned and adjudged to course, poor Marjory.

Did you know that there is a stone in the parish of Birsay, so legend would have us believe, that uproots itself on the stroke of twelve on Hogmanay and begins to walk towards the nearby loch? When it get there it dips its head in the water and then returns to its former place where it remains immovable for the next twelve months. Do not try to witness this performance as many stories tell of those who did and were found next morning, lying dead next to the stone.

Did you know that the first Womens ‘Ba’ was played in Kirkwall on Christmas Day 1945?

About 30 women, equally divided among ‘uppies’ and ‘doonies’, took part. Orkney males registered their disapproval by stealing the ba’. Order was restored and the ‘uppies’ soon claimed victory. The ba’ was presented to Mrs Margaret Yule. The same year a new record was set for the Boys’ Ba’, the whole event being over in 4 minutes.

Did you know that Orkney provided about 2000 men for the navy during the Napoleonic Wars; an impressive number from a population at the time of about 24,000. Another impressive figure was that of Birsay man John Gaudie, one of the hand-picked crew of Nelson’s barge. Lady Emma Hamilton declared him to be the finest looking man in the crew. Another Orcadian, James Leith of Stenness, served as a gunner on the ‘Victory’.

His Trafalgar medal is still treasured by his family. Yet another Orkney lad was a cabin boy who attended the Admiral from the West Indies until his death. Top of the tree, however, was 63 year old Alexander Graeme of the estate of Graemeshall. Graeme was a one armed admiral who served as Commander-in-Chief at the Nore.

Did you know that that was the first time a gunner shot down a Junkers in 1940 the Orcadians applauded rather than cheered.

Did you know that many years ago, outside the old kirkyard at Stromness, there was a pile of stones? It was the custom that as each mourner attending a funeral passed by he would throw a stone on to the pile. What was the significance of the pile? Well it covered the spot where a suicide was buried for at that time they could not be buried within the walls of the kirkyard. The reason for this strange custom is unknown but equally strange was the rule that when the church eventually allowed suicides to be interred within the kirkyard walls they could not enter by the gate – the coffin had to be passed over the wall.

Did you know that there is evidence that domestic toilet arrangements were working at the prehistoric settlement of Skara Brae? The stone structures were found to have recesses in the walls with drains leading to what was a crude sewer system.

Did you know that on mid-summers day in the Orkney Islands the sun is above the horizon for approximately 18½ hours?
Our newsletter has had 3 editors since the first edition was published in 1997. The first was founder member of the society, Gavin Rendall. Gavin already had experience in the publishing world thanks to his highly successful magazine Westray Roots. Gavin edited Sib Folk News for 5 years retiring after his 21st successful issue.

The late Olaf Mooney, a committee member, then volunteered to step into the editor’s chair. Olaf had become interested in desktop publishing and thought that with a bit of help he could produce a newsletter. With the aid of an editorial committee Olaf successfully produced the next 9 issues, retiring after issue No 26, published in June 2004.

At the May 2004 AGM John Sinclair, a new member, who had returned to Orkney after retiring, volunteered to produce a couple of issues until a permanent editor could be found. John had the advantage of having spent a lifetime in the world of advertising including a number of years in a graphic studio. He also had, and was familiar with, the software used throughout the publishing industry. Now 51 issues later he is still producing Sib Folk News while he waits for a ‘permanent’ editor to be found.
we’re waiting to welcome you to the Orkney Family History Society

Here are some of the volunteers you might meet when you visit the Orkney Family History Offices on the first floor of the Orkney Library and Archive building in Junction Road Kirkwall.

Between them they have an unrivalled knowledge of Orkney families and genealogical records which they willingly share with visitors.

Bring along whatever documentary evidence you have and they will try to fill in the blanks in your family tree.

Back Row left to right: Cathleen Spence, Hazel Goar, Gillian Mooney, Hazel Foubister, Isobel Stout, Anne McCreath, Jessie Mowat, John Sinclair, Tom King, Katherine Kemp, Margaret Kemp, Morag Sinclair, Marion Cursiter, Ian Cameron, Elaine Gray, Frank Eunson.

Seated left to right: Billy Cardho, Mimes Manson, Jackie Harrison, Nan Scott, George Gray, Anne Rendall, Elaine Sinclair, Davina Brown.

ORKNEY FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
Twentieth 1997–2017 Anniversary