The Society of the Friends of Orkney Wireless Museum

BULLETIN



VOLUME: 28 No. 2 DECEMBER 2019

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BILL AND SANDY SAY FAREWELL

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Hello and welcome to issue No. 2 of the 1919 bulletin.
This season has been a bit up and down as far as visitor numbers go. Since Bill Wright retired Liz Gilmour has been making a wonderful job of keeping note of all the statistics. She reported that although the paying visitor numbers were slightly down on last year the Doors Open Days had boosted the numbers. (It allowed free entry).
Our new volunteers have been settling down well and our regular ones have continued to give stalwart service.

These were:-
Kim Foden, Fraser Garriock, Bruce Gorie, Liz Gilmore, Jack Hargreaves, Stuart Irvine, Billy Jolly, Peter MacDonald, Nicol Manson, Catherine McIver, Eric Ploughman, Bob Presland, Bill Stevenson, Peter Stokes, Sandy Thomson, Cyril Unsworth, Dennis Walls,

We owe a special thanks to Liz Gilmore and Pete Stokes for all the work they have done. As well as Liz being our Museum Treasurer both she and Pete took on the task of sorting float change and the daily record sheets. Robert Grieve has had a busy season as both 'Friends' Treasurer and shop manager. He also keeps our web site updated. Kim Foden often called along the Museum during the season to check things were running smoothly. She also filled in for the occasional gaps which appeared.

We regret to announce the passing of some or our friends and volunteers over the last year. Dr Allan Way was a very unassuming and friendly gentleman who had many talents. He gifted the Museum his book collection and radio equipment when he realised he had a long battle with his illness. He was also an active member of the Orkney Vintage Club.
Three of our Friends members, Donnie McDonald , Cliff Laycock, and Ian Gall also passed away and we pass on our sympathy to all the families concerned with these people. We are pleased to say one of our volunteers from last year Lisa Kennedy has been making progress with her illness.

We had quite an active involvement in the indoor Vintage Rally this year. As well as the Lancaster bomber wireless station (see separate article) we had a table displaying a selection of WW2 items. The main theme for indoors was WW2 and the Hatston Air Station, HMS Sparrowhawk.

In August, a small get together was arranged, for a presentation to Bill Wright and Sandy Firth on their retirement from the Museum, (See separate article), and on the 15th September a visit was made by our volunteers to our Store in Orphir. (I think this is the first time a large group has been able to visit the store).
At our Friends AGM on 2nd September we were pleased to get a talk from Tom Stevenson of the Museum of Communication, Burntisland. It seems that we have many issues in common with the MOC.
On the 21st and 22nd September we took part in the Doors Open Weekend. This was largely thanks to the planning and organisation off Kim Foden and Catherine McIver. Over the weekend we had 218 folk on the Saturday and 38 on the Sunday, mostly locals. A free prize draw was held which proved very popular and we received lots of interesting comments and new contacts. This was a real boost at a quiet time of the year when the season is drawing to a close. Kim commented 'I was amazed at the number of young children who were fascinated by the valves, crystal sets, morse code and wind up gramophone'.

One thing I was delighted with this year is the gifting of some radio gear to the Longhope Lifeboat Museum. This equipment had led a charmed life. About three years ago we got a message that this same equipment was in a skip and if we wanted it we had better call along. Fraser Garriock and I did this and it turned out that the equipment seemed to have come from a lifeboat. Longhope Lifeboat was contacted through Friends member Bob Campbell and they gladly accepted it. I hope to include a photograph of this equipment in the next bulletin.

Lastly we held a volunteer's get together on Saturday 23rd November at the Lynnfield Hotel. This was a friendly event to discuss the previous year and draw on our volunteer's experiences. Our volunteers do different shifts so they don't always get a chance to meet each other. It also gave us a chance to surprise Bob Presland with a glass plaque thanking him for his twenty years of service with the Museum. (See picture elsewhere) . **Well done Bob!**

P.McD

Bill and Sandy say farewell

On Wednesday 14 August at the Wireless Museum, a presentation was made to retired Directors Bill Wright and Sandy Firth. Present were Sandy's wife Hilda and some of their colleagues from past and recent years. Margaret Flett also attended representing her late husband Arthur Flett who was a Trustee/Director for many years of the Museums existence.



Sandy Firth and Bill Wright at Orkney Wireless Museum to receive their Retirement Presentation.

Museum Chairman Peter MacDonald mentioned that after the Founder died in 1988, the family had to take steps to try and ensure the Museums future. What better than to invite Jim MacDonald's close friends Bill, Sandy and Arthur to form a Charitable Trust along with some of Jim's family. This was duly done, made much easier by Bill's experience as a Lawyer. Peter also mentioned that he had often drawn on Bill's experience to identify and explain about items arriving at the Museum. Bill also carried out detailed record keeping in the Museum for many years and often organised Special Event Stations. Peter also mentioned Sandy's woodworking skills which were often drawn upon to make shelving and cabinets, also his explanatory item labels which widely used throughout the Museum. Sandy was also a good promoter and recruiter of volunteers. Peter said that Sandy's constant enthusiasm was always a boost when times were difficult.

For their 30 years of dedication to the Museum Bill and Sandy were each presented by an engraved glass 'Ice Block' made by Orkney Crystal. Those present then went on to have a good chat and a cup of tea.



Left to right. Kim Foden, Mary Flett, Lena MacDonald, Hilda Firth.



Peter MacDonald, Robert Grieve.



Sandy Firth, Bill Wright, Ed Holt, Margaret Flett.

A Letter from the Jellicoe Express

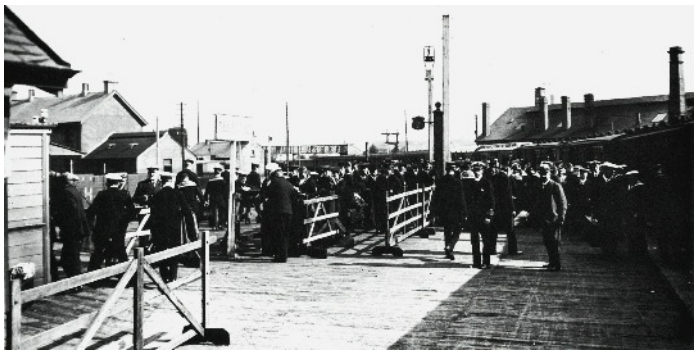
Alison McFarlane and her partner visited the Wireless Museum earlier this Summer, and she happened to mention that her Great Uncle John McLellan was at Scapa Flow during the first world war. She also mentioned that she had in her possession a letter written by John on his way up to Orkney on the Jellicoe Express the infamous troop train which ran from London to Thurso taking military personnel to Orkney. Alison explained that John was on his way up to Orkney to do some training on HMS Hercules before tragically being lost on HMS Vanguard when it blew up at its moorings in Scapa Flow a month later. Alison has now donated this letter to the Wireless Museum, for which we are very grateful. Edit.

John's Letter:

22/6/1917

Dear Auntie

Just a little bit of scribble to let you know that I am still alive and in the best of health and on my way to Scapa Flow to join the Grand Fleet. We left Chatham at 12 noon on Wednesday and travelled in a special train to London where we got another special which was to take us through to Thurso. We got on alright to Inverness where we got out and were supplied with our breakfast. After breakfast we went back to our train and continued our journey to Scapa. We went on alright until we reached Helmsdale where we were shunted to let the Royal Train pass, we were then turned and sent back to Inverness as they could not deal with us while the King was about, he would need to get all the attention.



Naval personnel being counted off the Jellicoe Express at Inverness Station.



John McLellan.

The King was on his way to visit the Grand Fleet and as there are 156 men in our Special for four different ships they could not start distributing us strangers until after the King left. Well we went back to Inverness and were brought to the Naval Barracks which before the war was the Alexandra Hotel and is just across the river from the castle and in fact standing at the door we were looking up at the Castle, I expect you know the place.

After tea we went out for a walk. A London chap and I scattered from the rest and went for a walk and all that my chum did all the time was praise Scotland, but the worst of it was that it was raining all the time from London until after we went to bed in the barracks, but the sun is shining today and we enjoy the journey better. All my pals and I are going to the one ship that is the HMS Hercules one of the latest battleships.

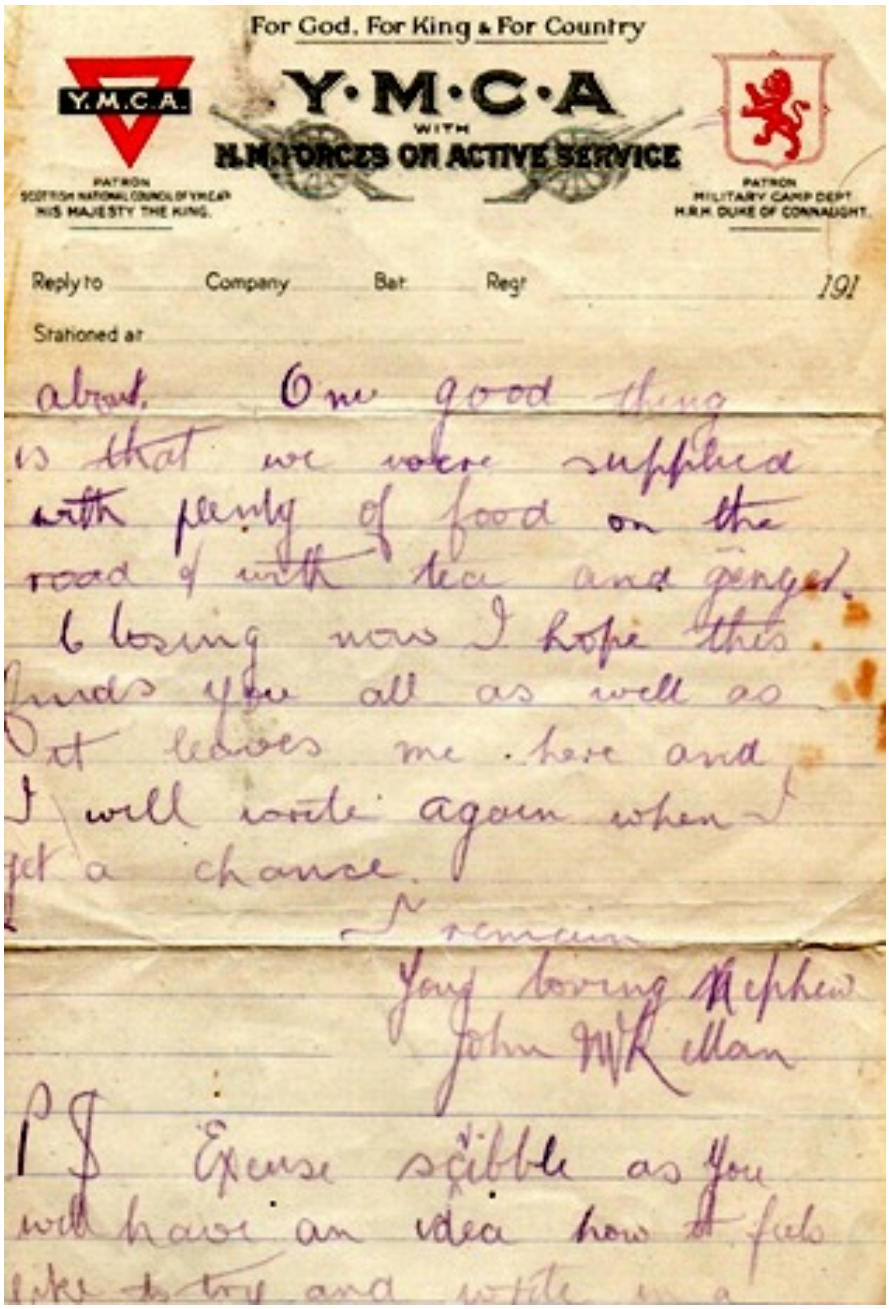
After this letter I will not be able to tell you anything about our ships or where we are stationed as all our letters will be censored. Well Auntie, I will need to draw to a close now as I can't set my mind to writing while there are others talking and the train rumbling and tumbling about. One good thing is that we were supplied with plenty of food on the road with tea and ginger.

Closing now I hope this finds you all as well as it leaves me here and I will write again when I get a chance.

I remain your
Loving Nephew

John

PS Excuse scribble as you will have an idea how it feels like to try and write in a fast train.


For God, For King & For Country

Y.M.C.A.

Y·M·C·A
WITH
H.M. FORCES ON ACTIVE SERVICE

PATRON
SCOTTISH NATIONAL COUNCIL OF Y.M.C.A.
HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

PATRON
MILITARY CAMP DEPT.
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT.

Reply to Company Bat. Regt 191

Stationed at

about. One good thing
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Closing now I hope this
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get a chance.

I remain
Your loving Nephew
John McKellan

P.S. Excuse scibble as you
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like to try and write in a

Part of John's letter

Alison's Uncle Pat McLellan was able to provide some more information on John and stated that John was 16 when WW1 began and he was born in Greenock, the second child of highlanders Duncan and Catherine who were both Gaelic speakers, John was probably a railwayman before joining the Navy.

HMS FOAM, FLEET MESSENGER, SCAPA FLOW WW1

One Sunday afternoon during the 1919 Season, we received a visit from a gentleman with a very interesting item in his possession. James Hughes-Onslow from London un-wrapped the item to display a large round attractive brass plaque with writing engraved on it. The plaque read:

WAR SERVICE
1914-1918
H.M.S. FOAM
FLEET MESSENGER
SCAPA FLOW

Sometime later when James had returned home, I contacted him again and he sent me the following e-mail:

Very glad to hear from you, we enjoyed the Museum. My grandfather was Col. Maurice Lee. He was in the Royal Flying Corps (then part of the Army) during WW1. It was after the war that he bought HMS Foam and sailed it around the Med between the wars. He lost everything when it was sunk by Brits in Toulon or Marseille to stop the Germans using the harbour at the start of WW2. He went to live in London, then in Palma Mallorca where he died in 1970.



Col. Maurice Lee



James Hughes – Onslow with his plaque outside the Wireless Museum

SOME POSTAL HISTORY OF SCAPA FLOW WW1

In 1986 the late Jim MacDonald was corresponding with a John D Hup from East Sussex regarding early postal history at Scapa Flow during WW1. John contacted Jim at the time, and very generously sent the following information –

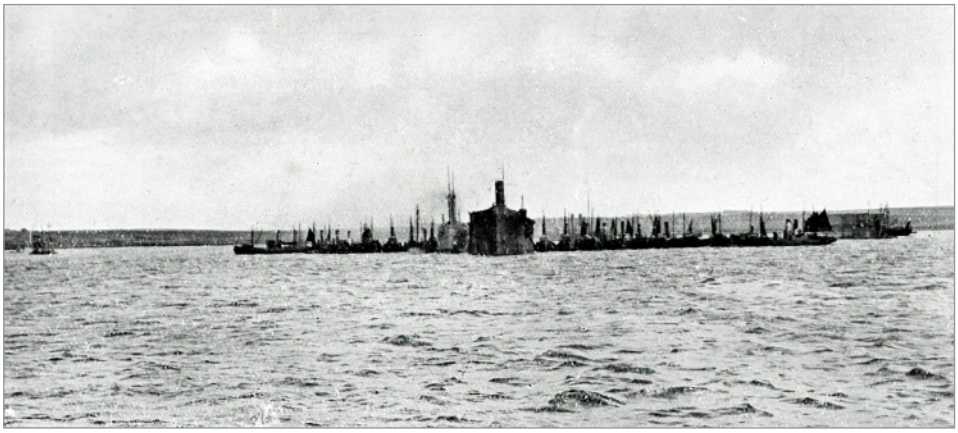
Dear Jim

I have decided to send you, for the Museum three examples of postal history concerning Scapa Flow during WW1. These are quite scarce items but I am sure they will be of interest to your visitors. I also enclose a few notes which may be of some help when they are being arranged for display.

Notes:
Extract from "British Naval Post and Censor Marks of the first world war" By Dr M. H. Gould.

<u>Fleet Post Office A</u>

It was reported on 24th September 1914 that a temporary shed was in use on Scapa Pier for the distribution of mails. Mail was sent to Kirkwall for sorting, (and at this stage, apparently for cancelling), and forwarding to Inverness. The Admiralty wished to establish a naval base office at Longhope. When opened on 3rd June 1915, this office, which was situated in the hulk "Imperieuse", was designated Fleet Post Office A. It appears that the mail was now sent directly to Inverness, ie. Bypassing Kirkwall. The office certainly cancelled its own mail from about this date.
Carter states that the office moved to the hulk Victorious at the end of 1918, closing with the base in April 1920. Although the main fleet had moved to Rosyth by April 1918 FPO A apparently remained at Scapa.



Fleet Post Office A "Imperieuse" in Longhope Bay, surrounded by fleet tenders.

<u>Scapa Flow (FPO A)</u>

On 31st December 1915 the Fleet Mail officer at FPO asked to be issued with a rotary stamping machine since his office only had three barred circle postmarks and one single ring mark for about 20,000 letters per day. (in fact, it is noted in other correspondence that there were 4 barred circle postmarks, and the Controller of stores at Edinburgh also reported sending 3 single ring marks with Fleet Post Office and two with Fleet Post Office A during 1915. So far not all of the single ring types have been noted and some may therefore have been reserved for counter work. On 16th February 1916 a hand operated Krag continuous machine, being spare machine No. 1152 from the N. Western district, was sent to Longhope. The use of "FPO A" in place of the town name was approved on 18th March.



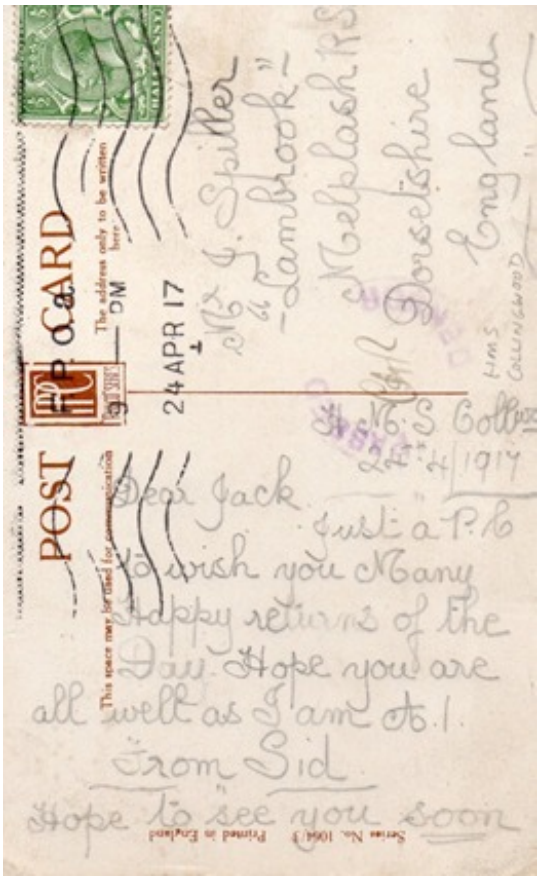
Naval postal clerks sorting the mail aboard FPO A



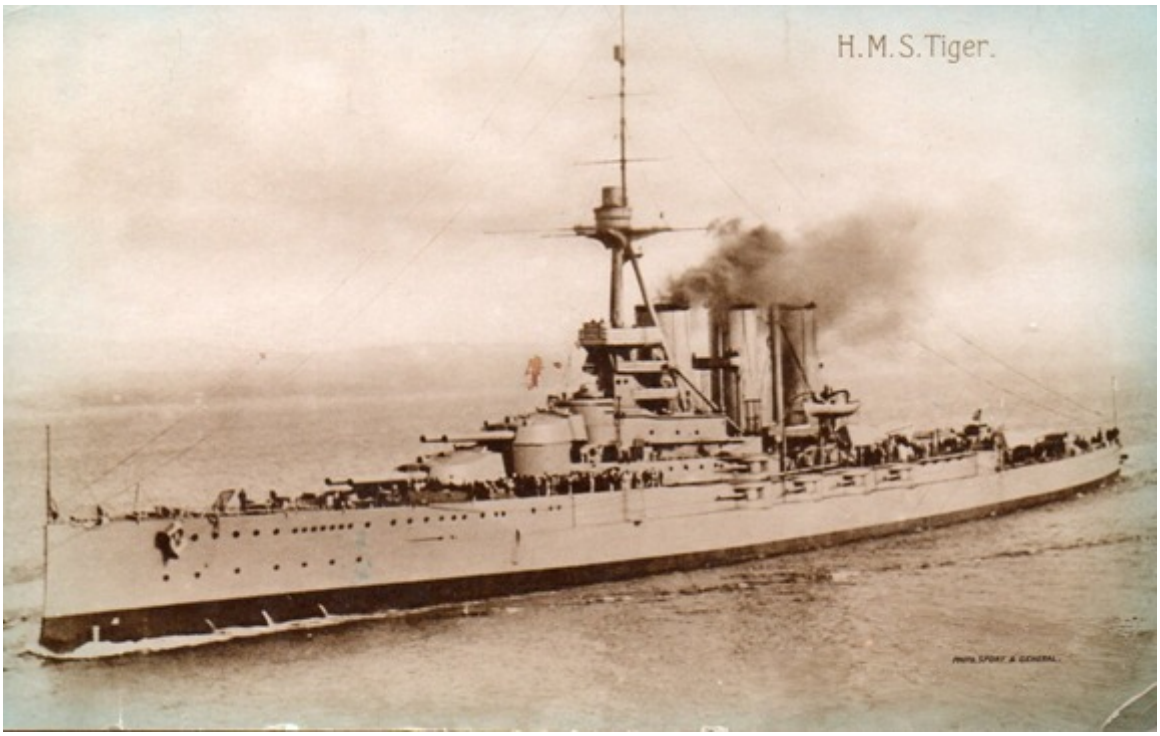


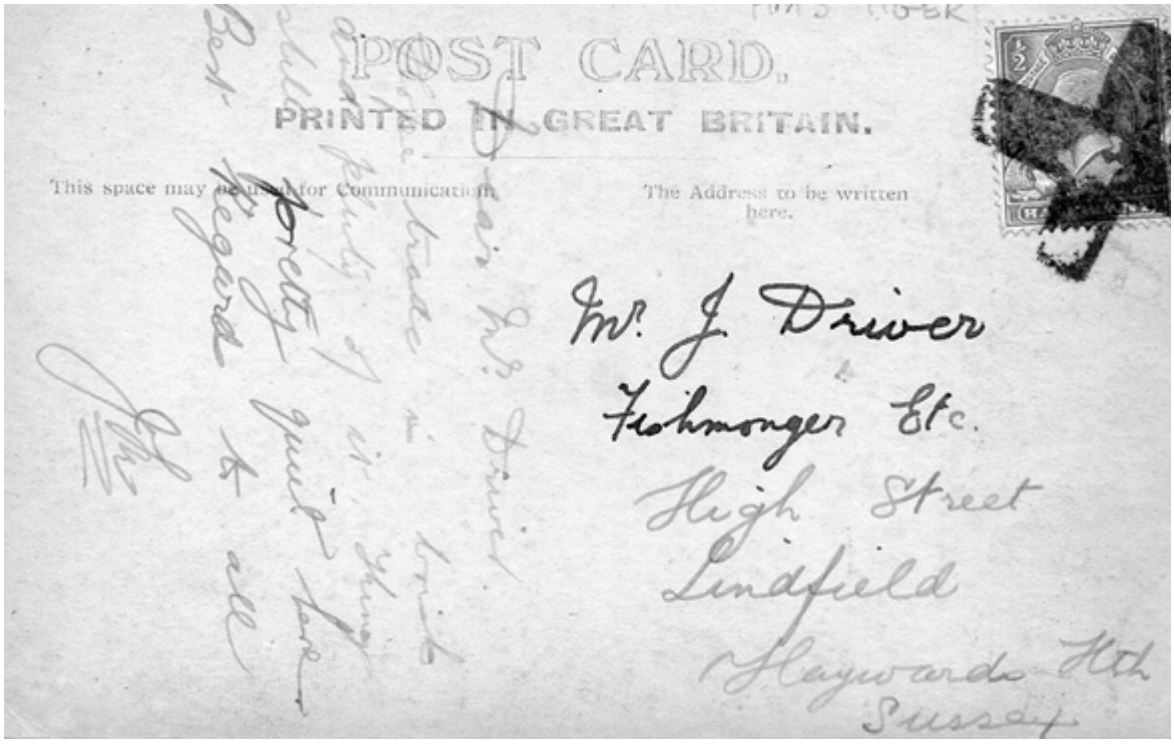
Post Card to a London address with single ring "Fleet Post Office" date stamp 14th August 1916.
Fine circular censor mark as applied on HMS Vanguard.





To: Dorset with clear Krag machine cancel - F.P.O. a, 24th April 1917 and Censor mark from HMS Collingwood.





To: Sussex, the stamp cancelled with a 'dumb' cork cancel in the shape of a cross as used on HMS Tiger.

This kind of mark was a way to keep secret dates and locations. Cork, India rubbers and even broom handles were used to make all kinds of 'dumb' cancels.

Although serving soldiers and airmen had free postage during WW1 the Navy still had to use stamps when home based. Soldiers training in Britain also had to use stamps. Overseas service was regarded as 'Active Service'.



This envelope has a round censor strike 32mm in diameter proving it to have been struck on board HMS Imperieuse; The stamp is cancelled by a 'bars' type 'dumb' cancel, and there is also the Fleet Post Office machine date stamp.

Twenty years of service

At a volunteers meeting on 23rd November at the Lynnfield Hotel, Bob Presland was presented with a glass plaque to commemorate his twenty years of service with the Museum. Shown here with his Wife Pat.



Some pictures from Doors Open day

Doors Open Day was a national event run by the Scottish Civic Trust and supported by Historic Environment Scotland. Delivered in collaboration with area co-ordinators from local authorities and amenity groups, supported by volunteers. Doors Open Days, along with Scottish Archaeology Month, took place throughout Scotland in September and was part of European
Heritage Days.



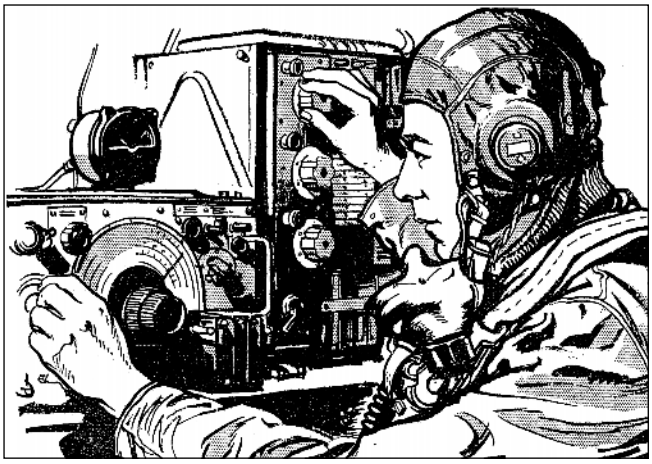
Volunteers Kim Foden and Catherine McIvor with some of the 'Free' Prize Draw items



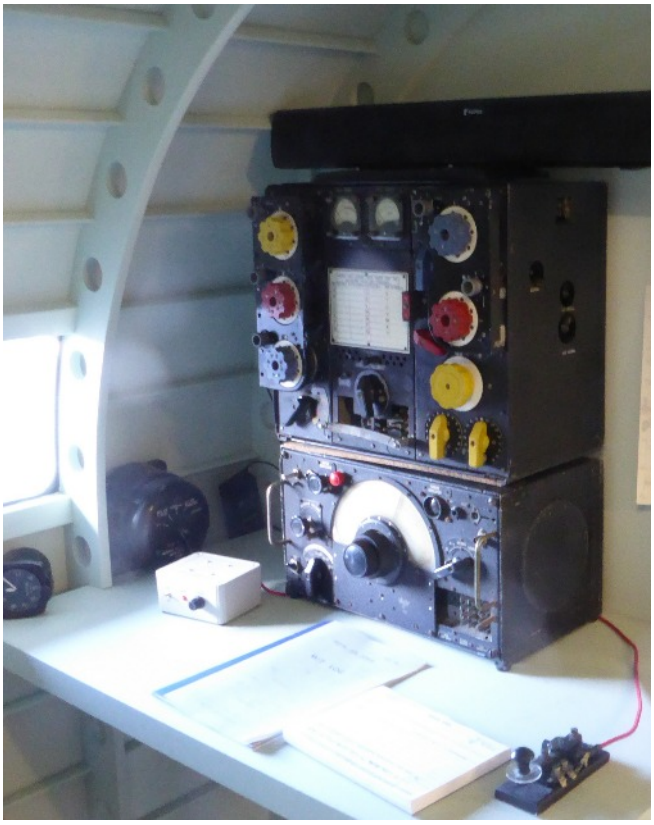
One small visitor takes on his Dad at the Pong computer game

Crowds visit the Lancaster at “Hatston 80”

In August Orkney Vintage Club’s annual show included an indoor exhibition as part of “Hatston 80”, the 80th anniversary of HMS Sparrowhawk at Hatston, Kirkwall.



Huge interest was created there by Orkney Wireless Museum’s life-size, cut-away section of the wireless operator’s position in an Avro Lancaster bomber. Researched and meticulously built by volunteer curator, Nicol Manson (even down to the correct colours of paint used), it was fitted out with radios and equipment from Orkney Wireless Museum’s store.



T1154 transmitter and the R1155 receiver.

Included were the standard MF/HF radio transmitter and receiver fitted in all large aircraft of Bomber Command, the T1154 transmitter and the R1155 receiver. This radio installation was used for communication between air to ground using wireless telegraphy (Morse code) and Radio Telephony (spoken).

The Morse key in our Lancaster was used by many visitors to send their name in Morse code and gain a certificate. However, this was not the correct type used on the aircraft. The proper type, the now very fragile original Bakelite “bathtub” key was safely exhibited in a display case. The key’s electrics are fully enclosed, therefore reducing the likelihood of explosion caused by a spark in a dangerous environment. A clip on the key could be used in an emergency to send a continuous tone as a signal to rescuers.



Bakelite “bathtub” key.

Displayed with the key was an inertia detonator switch. This could be set to trigger an explosion on impact in order to destroy the top secret magnetron, on board as part of the navigational equipment.

We must now look for a radio operator’s helmet/microphone/earphones to use next time as the earphones we used on the day were the only kind available to us.

Volunteers at the stand were delighted to be visited by so many people of all ages, many of whom gave accounts of family members who had flown in Lancasters or similar aircraft.



Nicol Manson, builder of the replica, trying his hand at some Morse code.

One lady sought out Nicol to shake his hand and thank him personally for building the replica. Some visitors requested the "full immersion" experience which was gained by darkening the inside and turning up the sound of the Lancaster's four Rolls Royce Merlin engines, and the recording of the pilot and crews' voices during action. This helped to bring home the reality of flying over enemy territory in dangerous and uncomfortable surroundings. We drew the line at filling it with aviation fuel fumes!

The Lancaster and its contents now reside at Twatt (HMS Tern) where work is ongoing by Birsay Heritage Trust to form a museum in the former airfield's fire station. However, we hope to bring it along to future events.



Ginger

Thanks must go to the public for their enthusiasm, interest and many donations to the museum, to Nicol for all his hard work and expertise, to Catherine McIver for the use of her garage and to JBT for generously giving us the use of a van to transport the Lancaster. Thanks to Ali Foden for driving the van and also for drawing "Ginger", the cat bomber pilot mascot.

I am sure that coverage given to the Lancaster on BBC Radio Orkney and in the Orcadian newspaper helped to put the museum on the map, so thanks go there too.

However, as Nicol points out, we must always remember those who flew and maintained the aircraft (six Orcadians were among the many lost while serving on Lancaster bombers). Planes and equipment were no use without the people to operate them.



Alfie MacDonald practicing being a Lancaster wireless operator

BBC Engineers from Orkney

In our last bulletin (Volume 28, No 1) we ran an article 'Television in Orkney' which mentioned some of the local lads, who in the early days, went on to be employed by the BBC. Here we can show two of them, David Stephen (who also went on to become proprietor of Thistle Television) and John Bews who spent many years working at Netherbutton, Holm when it was a Television Station.



David Stephen



John Bews, (shown middle of picture).
John is in good company with two other established local figures
- Dougie Shearer of the Phoenix Cinema (left) and Bertie Stockan one of Orkney's early 'Hydro' men (right).



As can be seen among the exhibits in Orkney Wireless Museum, Orcadians have for many decades strived to use new technology in order to connect with each other and the world. Examples which illustrate this are our early home-built crystal and valve radios, “seeing by wireless” in the 1930s using Baird’s mechanical televisor and our early telephone network using a radio link between North Ronaldsay and Sanday.

For several months during 2019 Orkney became the test bed for various communication systems having been chosen as one of three UK areas to take part in the 5GRuralFirst project, Somerset and Shropshire being the other two. Equipment used as part of this project has been donated to the museum.

Orkney was selected since it had poor existing internet connectivity. Also, the geography and climate would provide extra challenges – salt in the air and wind speeds, etc.

A consortium of 30 organisations, backed by the Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), collaborated to delivered 5GRuralFirst.
The belief is that bringing more connectivity to rural areas through new 5G technologies will bring major benefit to rural communities and industries.

In Orkney, project leaders worked with the community to see how 5G technologies could be deployed to benefit islanders, with Cisco providing the 5G cloud core for tests to run on.
The experiments on land and at sea included live transmissions of climate information using 5G from the windfarm at Hammers Hill in Evie which could identify potentially hazardous weather enabling appropriate action to minimise impact.
At fish farms in Scapa Flow 5G provided live environmental monitoring and security, where fixed line connections to these sites are not practicable.
Both examples increased efficiency within these industries.

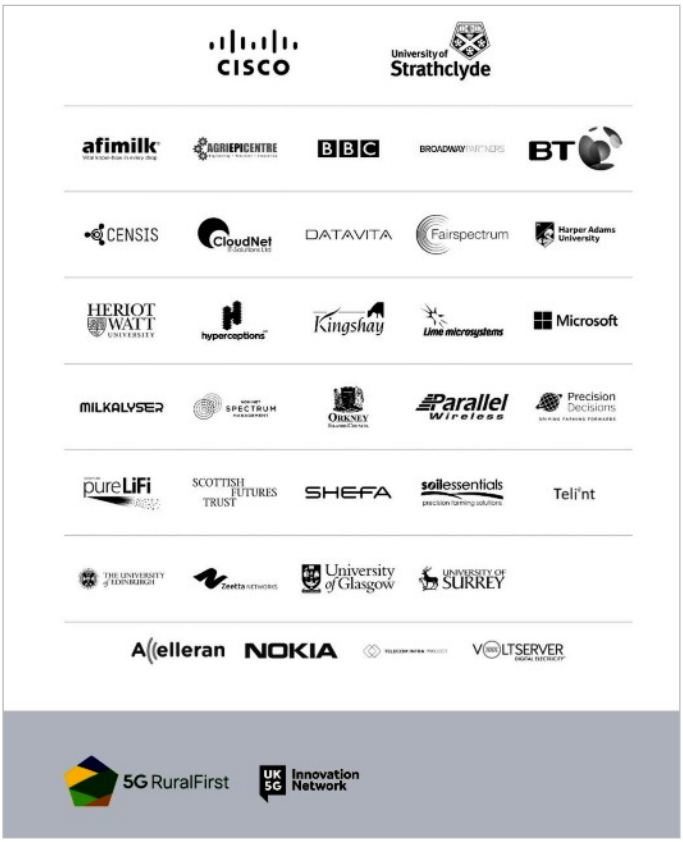
Powered by Cloudnet, new Open Roaming technology was tested using mobile, fibre and other technology to seamlessly and securely join Wi-Fi networks automatically. This was available to smart devices other than 5G.

Wi-Fi was available on tour busses for passengers using their smart devices. At various sites Orkney Origins, an augmented reality app created during the project, was available to download at access points enabling visitors to be guided as they looked around.

Handsets were provided to some islanders with access to the 5GRuralFirst network which allowed them to experience the improved connectivity in day to day life – downloading TV programmes, banking and general internet activity.



Trial 5G equipment, kindly donated to Orkney Wireless Museum by



Enabling connectivity between individual objects to the internet allowing them to be controlled and monitored remotely 5G will underpin a whole new generation of services known as the Internet of Things (IoT) .

Many skills and much experience have been gained from the project and some of the kit will be left running where it is used.

5G will bring a massive leap forward in communications and connectivity, however, it will probably be several years before 5G is in general use among the public, but watch this space. At the time of writing this article Orkney Islands Council is considering submitting a funding bid towards 5G Rural Community, a project which will roll out full mobile coverage of 4G and 5G across the county, building on the work already done.

Orkney Wireless Museum is very proud to have been donated kit from 5G RuralFirst. As Greig at The University of Strathclyde says, “It marks the history of the pioneering wireless work going on in the islands”.

We would like to thank those people connected to the project for arranging this donation.

Orkney Wireless museum is now a museum well ahead of its time!

Sources: www.5gruralfirst.org
The Orcadian newspaper

KF

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our friends and volunteers

