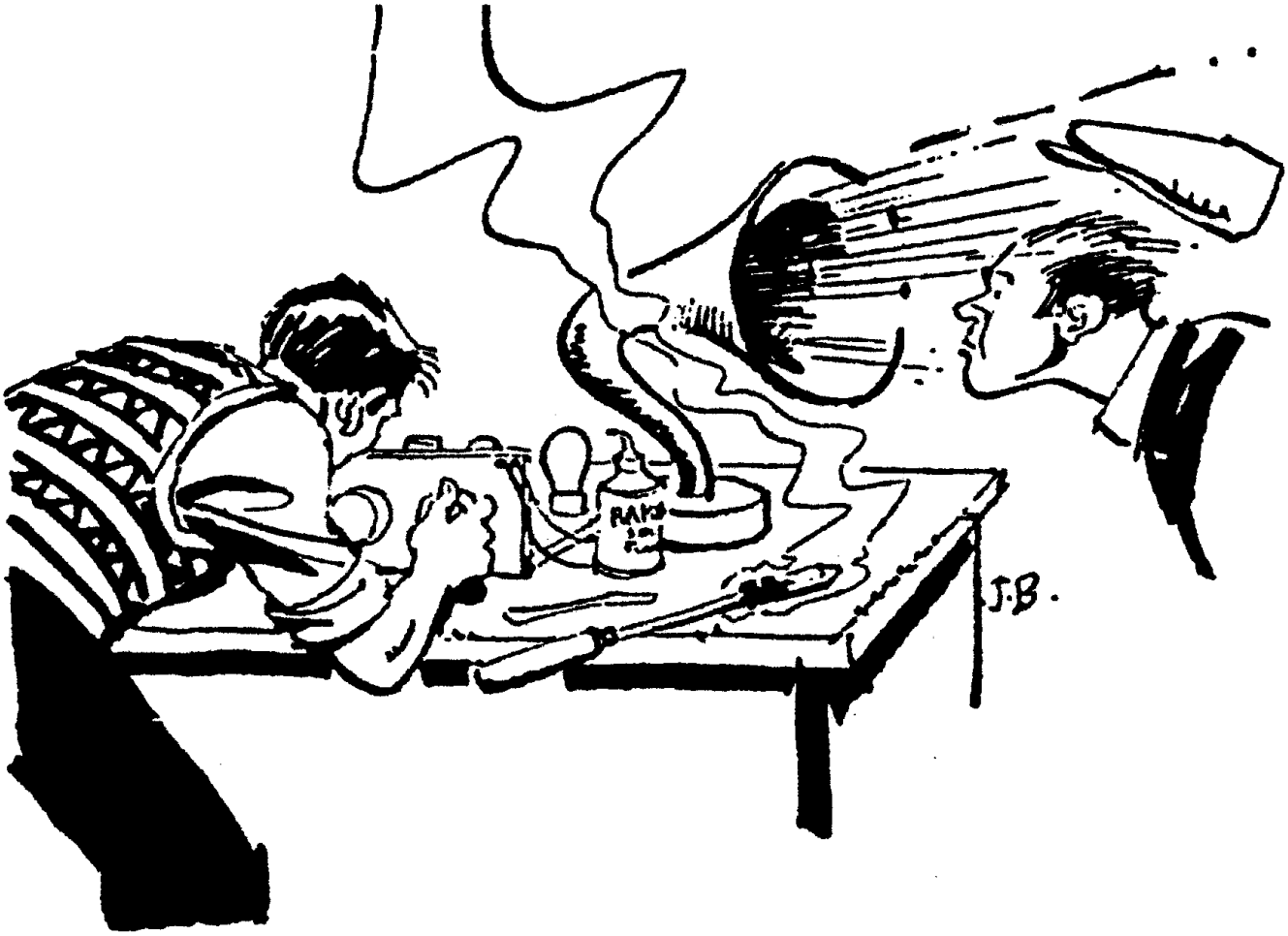
THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF ORKNEY WIRELESS MUSEUM

BULLETIN



VOLUME: 28 No. 1 JUNE 2019

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Hello and welcome to our first bulletin for 2019

This year started quietly with April's visitor numbers down on last year. This did not come as a major surprise to me personally since I noticed a distinct lack of people about, and even the main street was nearly deserted on my Sunday shift. May however picked up a lot beating the previous year. We have had a big movement in Museum volunteers this year. Due to retirements and health issues we lost quite a few people and urgent recruitment was needed. Fortunately we have been quite lucky in finding some new ones. Sandy Thomson who had recently retired from the Hydro stepped in to staff our Wednesday slot, Cyril Unsworth has been coming in on a Tuesday to staff the morning, Stuart Irvine has been working with Nicol Manson on a Thursday afternoon and Eric Ploughman has stepped in to cover some holiday slots, (See pictures elsewhere). We are indeed fortunate that such good will exists for the Museum.

Preparations for opening started early this year with Liz Gilmore and Pete Stokes freshening displays and making new name cards for many items. I would not like to guess how many hours they have spent in the Museum but it will be many. Comments have been made about how much fresher and brighter the displays look.

One significant change to our display this year had been an update of our original gun room operations map which came from the Sector Operations Room (Black Building) in Inganess road.
This map has stood in the Museum for many years, but it was thought that a new colour version with all the Orkney defence details marked in modern clear graphics would enhance the visitor experience. Robert Foden of the Herald Printshop produced an excellent example which now stands in place of the old map. In an ideal world (if we had the space) we could have displayed both maps together.

Another item which has joined our displays this year is the splendid Hallicrafter receiver which we received from Les Mather from Derbyshire last year. (See December 2018 bulletin). It had originally belonged to Cecil Cleland who had used it as a voluntary interceptor during the war.

One item which has changed this year is the big central stand which spans the large glass display cabinets in the centre of the Museum. The old one had done a magnificent job for us over the years, but it was decided a stronger one was needed to take heavier weights. An approach was made to the local 'Men's Shed' to see if they would be willing to put a new one together for us. The end result was a very sturdy attractive wooden one which fitted our needs perfectly. Ian Stallard of the Men's Shed prepared and assembled it inside the Museum. Due to pressures of time, Nicol Manson of the Wireless Museum, applied (and sponsored) finishing touches to the stand.

The Museum building suffered a broken window over the winter. Some frustrated reveller decided to kick in our toilet window for some reason (Perhaps he was after the toilet roll). The Police informed me later that they had caught the culprit who did not come from Orkney. Liz Gilmore noticed another footprint below one of our larger windows which was a narrow miss.

Bill Wright informed me that the Museum had made an appearance in the Glasgow Herald Magazine during March. In an article entitled 'Weekend days out, Scotland's 15 best unusual museums', we were ranked number No 6 behind amongst others, Surgeons' Hall Museum, Edinburgh and the Glasgow Police Museum.

We were also delighted to see that one of the articles from our bulletin 'Experimenting hoping and trying' by Kim Foden (Volume 27, Bulletin No 1) had made an appearance in the Winter edition of the British Vintage Wireless Society bulletin. This is probably Britain's premier radio enthusiast magazine and to have two Orcadian pioneers mentioned in it is great news



KGS Librarian, Harry Curran passing on tips about cataloguing to Fraser Garriock.

Also during the Winter Fraser Garriock and I made a start in trying to catalogue our blossoming book collection. After a few false starts, we were fortunate in gaining the assistance of the Kirkwall Grammar School librarian Harry Curran who was able to advise us on some improvements.
Our shop has been restocked by Robert Grieve and is looking good. A new mini version of the new wartime map is also available to purchase.

Preparations are being made for a special display of Orkney related wartime equipment to go on display at the Orkney Classic Motor Show (Vintage Rally) this year. Kim Foden raised the idea of constructing a Lancaster bomber wireless station similar to the one at Imperial War Museum, Duxford ,where people can sit inside the cabin and operate a morse key. Spare original radio equipment was available at the Museum store so the idea seemed a good one. In the event Museum volunteer Nicol Manson built and assembled a wonderfully accurate version of the station which will do the Museum proud for many years to come. (See pictures elsewhere in the bulletin).

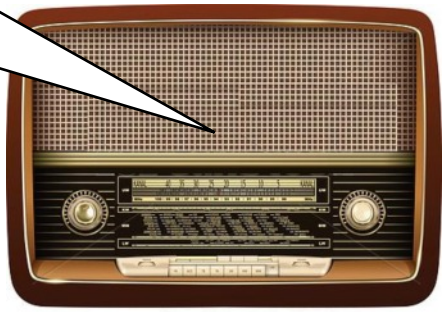
Glaitness Primary School were doing a project on communications in Kirkwall during WW2, and had approached the Museum through Kim Foden to get some information and photographs. Sandy Firth also gave the children a talk at the School. A super little book was produced which is well illustrated by the children's drawings.

With Bill and Sandy retiring last year it was left to yours truly to change the combination numbers for the entry door and alarm. The entry door went well and feeling fairly chuffed with myself I had a go at the alarm with the result of managing to lose everything that was on it! My son Sean came to the rescue eventually managing to find an engineer's manual on the internet. As the saying goes – 'don't give up your day job'! PMcD

NOTE FOR YOUR DIARY

28th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 28th Annual General Meeting of the Society of the Friends of Orkney Wireless Museum is to be held at the Wireless Museum Premises, Kiln Corner, Kirkwall, on Monday 2nd September 2019 at 7.00pm.



NEW FACES AT THE MUSEUM

As mentioned in the news section we had lost quite a few of last year's volunteers for one reason or another. Fortunately we have managed to recruit some new ones to enable us to keep our doors open over the season. We take great pleasure in introducing them here:



Cyril Unsworth

Cyril is a keen radio man and radio amateur (call sign GM7GJM). In the 1960's Cyril worked both as a radio controller and a driver in the Lancashire County Ambulance Service. He later worked with the Water Board before going on to do voluntary work. Cyril is assisting RAYNET (Radio Amateurs Emergency Network) locally with the Hoy Half marathon this year.



Sandy Thomson

Sandy is a retired craftsman from the SSE (Scottish Hydro). Sandy has an interest in aircraft as well as radio and has a collection of novelty transistor radios. He was born and brought up in Orkney.



Stuart Irvine

Stuart is a long- time member of the Orkney Vintage Club. Stuart's interests include a collection of Diecast models. He is also the owner of a vintage Massey Ferguson 35 tractor.



Eric Ploughman

Eric came to Orkney in 1976 from his native village of Golspie, to teach Building subjects at Kirkwall Grammar School. Eventually this became part of what is now Orkney College, retiring from there some 10 years ago as Curriculum Leader in construction.

Married to Anna, from Deerness in 1980, they built a house in Finstown, staying there for nearly 25 years before moving to Aglath in Stenness to restore three run down farm buildings into what is now a one bedroom holiday cottage, a two bedroom holiday cottage and a large three bedroom house with a large Workshop and garden Over the summer months Eric and Anna will be down- sizing to a small cottage in Papdale Court, Kirkwall.

Eric has a significant collection of 45 and 78 rpm records and is currently considering having an early 1900's HMV hornless gramophone restored into working order. Eric is also the owner of a Sound Leisure Juke Box in working order, once used in both the Kirkwall Hotel and Cleaton House, Westray. In his spare time Eric plays the bagpipes in the Stromness Royal British Legion Pipe Band.

Letters :: Emails :: Letters :: Emails :: Letters :: Emails

Dear Curator

I enclose a number of what I hope are interesting items of radios.

I visited your establishment which was closed on a holiday visit so was disappointed a few years ago! I sent you some items later.

At the age of 81years I am having a clearance. I have been a radio fanatic since the 1940's when my parents had an accumulator driven radio! I ended up using it so much that my mum insisted that I paid for the charging of the accumulator, which I did by selling pails of sticks (Kindling) to neighbours.

Yours faithfully
Peter Wood (Edinburgh)

To the Orkney Wireless Museum, (*From a cruise boat visitor*)

I wish to express my sincerest appreciation to all who helped me view the OWM during my recent off-season visit to Kirkwall. I know of Peter MacDonald and Kim Foden but I'm sure there were others that helped fulfil my request. Peter was instrumental in arranging (persuading?) a volunteer to meet me that day (March 21st). Through a series of emails, he was able to accommodate my initial request and then my revised request (due to the 'delightfully fine weather of the North Atlantic) Many, Many thanks. Kim Foden turned out to be the volunteer to open the museum for me. Kim's pride and enthusiasm for OWM was immediately apparent and appreciated. It was kind of her to personally walk me through the various exhibits with very knowledgeable explanations. Kim obviously took great pride in explaining the 30 line Television of which I took an interest as I have dabbled in SSTV. Kim many thanks for opening the OWM for me.

I was pleasantly surprised with two of the radio models on display. The first being the American BC-348 receiver and the other being the HRO receiver. In my youth and prior to getting my ham license, I was an avid SWLer. My ham uncle loaned me the BC-348 for many years with which I listened to many shortwave broadcasts and ham QSOs. As you know this radio was designed for CW/AM modes but I quickly learned the tricks adjusting the AF/RF/BFO for SSB mode. It was like visiting with an old friend. The HRO was a similar model that I acquired at an estate sale. It was meant to be rack mounted and I had the separate 'box' that held all the tuning plugs. I had that radio for much of my SWL/ham period and several years ago gave it to a 'newbie' radio friend. To me the visit to the OWM became the highlight of my cruise vacation. Looking back now I would have been deeply disappointed had the weather prevented the cruise ship from visiting Kirkwall.

Needless to say that I will highly recommend visiting the OWM to whoever might be traveling to the Orkneys, be they radio enthusiasts or not.

My next goal will be to attempt contact with the museum radio station during your special event.

Best wishes to all.

Rick Hallowell/WA7SB

MY VISIT OF ITALIANS

Billy Jolly

Two gentlemen visited the Museum in October 2017. I overheard part of their conversation and asked them if they could wait till I had a chance to speak to them properly. It turned out that they were a father and son of Italian extraction who now lived in England. However their Grandfather/ Great Grandfather had been involved in the building of the Churchill barriers and the Italian Chapel during World War Two.

The Grandfather had paid a visit to Orkney some 10 years previously to see what was left of the chapel and the barriers. He was pleasantly surprised to see that the barriers were still in excellent 'working order' and the Chapel was in such good condition. The old man has since passed away, hence the visit of his descendants to see the results of his labours.

They were of course thoroughly impressed and delighted to see that they were still and important part of Orkney to this day.

During our conversation I suggested that there was just a slim chance that their Grandfathers photo may be included in the collection of albums on the table. I suggested the one called 'The Churchill Barriers and POWs'. The gentleman sat down and spent a considerable amount of time studying the fairly large number of photos when he suddenly and quietly said 'That's Grandad there'. This was a photograph containing about fifty men. It was in fact quite an emotional moment for them both. It even affected me in a small way.

They spent a short while looking over the Museum, particularly the WW2 exhibits and left with warm handshakes, expressing their gratitude to the Museum for the very positive results of their research.



Pavlo and Leon Riccio who recognised their Grandfather/Great Grandfather in a photo album inside the Museum.

Our Avro Lancaster Bomber Wireless Operators Station

From a suggestion from Kim Foden it was decided to build a replica Avro Lancaster Wireless Operators Station. These pictures show its constructor Nicol Manson with the station, ready for installation of the radio equipment.



Nicol with his newly constructed wireless station.



Nicol seated inside the wireless station.

Wireless equipment from our store assembled inside the station with a working Morse key. The complete station will make its first appearance at the indoor display at this year's Classic Motor Show (Vintage Rally) in August.

Television in Orkney

Peter MacDonald

In our December 2018 issue of the bulletin we carried an article ''60 years of Television in Orkney' by David Hutchinson. (Television had officially been launched in Orkney in 1958) From that article came an idea to interview various people who have either grown up with Television in Orkney or have played a part in its promotion. The following article attempts to do that, but by no means covers everybody who was involved in the early days **PMcD**

From the **Orkney Herald** of 1950 came the following news item:

Television Reception

'Using ultra-shortwave receiving equipment Mr Fred Pyle a Kirkwall electrician, received strong signals from the Midland television station at Sutton Coldfield, last week. Signals were first picked up at Kirkwall on Monday evening and on each succeeding evening till the week-end. Mr Pyle was able to listen for several hours to the television programme. His experimental equipment does not at the moment include apparatus to enable him to look-in, but he got clear reception of the sound channel and a strong aural signal on the vision channel. This freak long-range television reception coincided with unusually strong sunspot activity and brilliant northern lights'.

Robert Campbell who now lives in Dalkeith but has had a long association with Orkney, (Working at Orkney Television Enterprise and St Clair's Emporium as a television engineer) was able to throw some more light on Fred Pyle who sounded like an interesting chap. 'Fred first came to Orkney with the army (approx. 1941). Before the war Fred had worked in a radio shop in Wiltshire and by the end of the war he was like other engineers in Orkney, both an electrician and radio engineer. My mother once told me that Fred's wife Violet had bought a new electric cooker and the oven had been disconnected because the D.C. supply in Kirkwall could not cope with the heavy load! It was in the 1950's that Fred received BBC1 TV via the aurora! Fred had made a 405 line TV using a round VCR97 green cathode ray tube, so the picture would have been shades of green, the tuner was a modified unit from the war time airborne navigation system 'G'. TV signals started coming through one lunch time and lasted for several hours or longer and there was a lot of ghosting due to the multi reflections of the aurora. The story was written up at the time in the Orkney Herald by the editor Jack Twatt GM3CCK and friend of Fred.

From the booklet **'An Orkney Wireless Museum'** released in 1981 by James MacDonald came the following information: 'At the time of writing, we have enjoyed television for over 20 years, with a few pioneers tuning into the Aberdeen TV station long before that. Homes like Robertson's of Jacksons Cott. James Dearness of Myrtle Villa, Hoxa, John Harcus of Hurtiso and a few others, favourably situated, and with the new TV sets installed , were well visited at this time. John's daughter Joyce of the National Bank, Kirkwall invited the entire staff to come and view the England v. Scotland match of 1955. John himself told the neighbours they would be welcome to come and see the match. A goodly number just chanced their luck, but latecomers could hardly get in the house. Fortunately they were all Scottish supporters, but Mrs Harcus's cupboards were bare when the last guest left.

Local boys John Bews, David Stephen and Sydney Garrioch joined the staff of the BBC who were using the former Radar Pylons for their new station.

Although television signals from the transmitter at Meldrum near Aberdeen were theoretically out of range, when certain conditions were favourable, television could be viewed here in Orkney in 1956.

Kim foden of Orkney Wireless Museum remembers her dad's experiments:
Since the early Baird televisor system experiments in the '30s my dad, Jack Twatt, had been fascinated by resolving pictures by wireless.

One afternoon in 1957, he drafted in a team of enthusiastic muscle to erect an enormous telegraph pole in our garden. This was to give extra height to the waiting VHF aerial and associated amplifier. (The same team had recently helped him to install a monstrous power supply in the eves of the house for his amateur radio set. Mum must have been out on this occasion. It is possibly still there).

Kim stated 'The first television my Grandmother saw was the early Baird televisor constructed by my father and Jim. This Black and White Ekco was the last television she watched.'



Kim with her Grandmothers Black and White Ekco TV which had recently been donated to the Museum.

I expect that Sam Bews's lorry had been used to deliver the pole as I can't imagine it could have been shifted using the family's Bradford, but you never know. That poor vehicle had been party to many of his schemes.

Anyway, Fred Grieve had been borrowed from the Herald printing works and Fred Pyle had been sprung from Bob Garden's workshop for the afternoon and I remember the pole passing the kitchen window. Dad took the front end, Fred Grieve the heavy back end (with someone I can't remember) and Fred Pyle was in the middle contributing lots of sound effects.

In the end it all worked and, along with 74 other television licence holders in Orkney that year, Jack and his 5year old daughter enjoyed sporadic television viewing.

As a wee footnote, recently I was looking through my father's Amateur Radio Log Book and found the following entry: "December 2nd 1957 at 15.55. W1FOS calling CQ six. Heard on Pye 17 inch TV receiver on channel 2 (about 50Mhz)."

When did colour television arrive?

The Orcadian newspaper dated January 2, 1975 stated the following:
'Keelylang should be in operation at the end of the year giving colour TV on 625 lines. At present Netherbutton was in operation with black and white on 405 lines. The 625 line transmitter for Caithness situated at Rumster Forest has been in operation for some months. People in Orkney have already been buying colour televisions in anticipation of the new Orkney Transmitter and in the meantime are receiving marginal reception from Caithness'.

Dealers - St Clair's Emporium



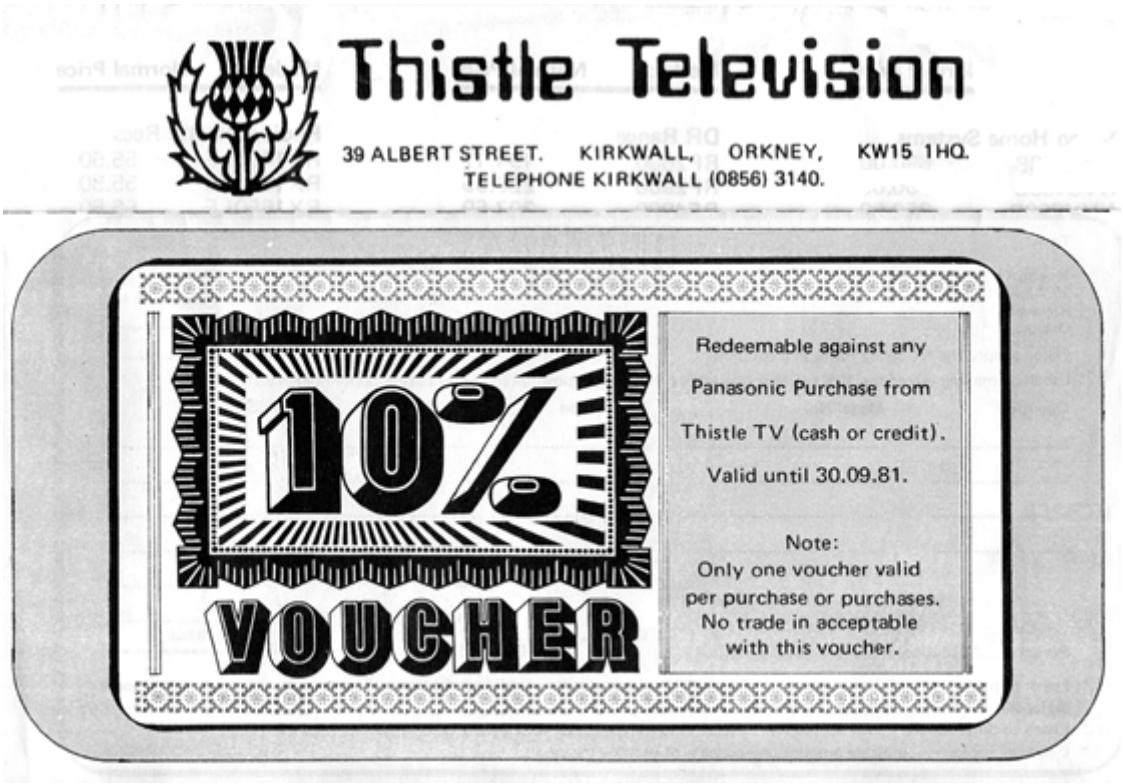
Brian Laughton with one of the very popular HMV Black and White Televisions which he sold at St Clair's Emporium (prop. Bill Sinclair) Brian remembers his father driving out in a lorry to Kirkwall airport in the early days when a plane load of Televisions arrived.
St Clair's Emporium also went on to become agents for Ferguson and Ultra Television as well.

Dealers – Thistle Television



Alan Windwick of Thistle Television (Prop. David Stephen)with an early National Panasonic television. Alan worked at Thistle Television for about Thirteen years.

Thistle Television were also agents for Doric, Panasonic, Toshiba and Tanberg Televisions. The shop also sold Panasonic and Technics sound equipment.



Dealers – Rhodes TV



Tom and Grace Rhodes

Tom and Grace Rhode's Orkney connections were founded long ago. Tom's naval service during the war involved ship surveys in Scapa Flow. Graces grandparents lived in South Ronaldsay and her mother was born and brought up there. Many childhood holidays to Granny and Grandads formed numerous Orkney friends.

In the late 50's a couple of wonderful holidays with their family were spent staying with her long time friends in St Margaret's Hope.
Their love for Orkney was born. Tom's farewell words being' if a job comes up let me know', and yes, it did, the coming of ITV to Orkney opened up the opportunity.

He moved in early 1960 leaving the family in Blackpool to complete schooling and started at Orkney Television Enterprise in Victoria Street which is now the Red Cross shop. The family joined him in 1961.

In 1966 they moved across the street to the little shop at the top of Gunn's Close running their own business selling, renting out and repairing Radio and Televisions such a Pye and Bush to name a couple.

The next move was down the street to what was Mair's old fish shop across from the Royal Hotel, extending the business with a big increase in the rental side and to include a large range of electrical goods in their newly refurbished shop. Serving customers all over Orkney.
Tom and Grace retired in 1981.

Dealers - Orkney Television Enterprise



Eric Mclennan of Orkney Television Enterprise with a Sony Trinitron Television

Orkney Television Enterprise (Prop Eric Mclennan) is one of Orkney's earliest established television shops in Orkney and the only one in this article which is currently still trading.

Bob Smith, Bob Gunn and Mansie Spence were responsible for the establishing of the firm.

Eric informed me, 'I left Radio Rentals in Edinburgh and joined up with Orkney Television Enterprise at Robertson's shop in St Margaret's Hope in 1958. Not long after that I moved to Victoria Street in Kirkwall where the present Red Cross shop stands now. Around 1969 we moved to Broad Street where the present shop still operates. Televisions such as Ferguson, Ultra and HMV were very popular about then and they all had a fairly similar chassis for repair. Colour Television really started to take off, and because they were expensive, and prone to breakdowns, rentals took off in a big way. We had something in the region of 2,000 rentals with around 100 televisions in our store for back up.

If a rental television broke down we would try and get a replacement one to them the same day if possible. The demand for colour television was such that I actually took a van all the way to London to get some more. We had two vans running and employed six engineers.

A bit later on Japanese televisions started to appear in numbers. We had the Sony Trinitron which were reliable and had a very good picture. These sets were expensive to begin with but prices eventually started to come down. Other makes we sold were Grundig and Akai.

We had a yellow label on the back of our sets with our name and address and a code which told us the age of the set. We also added a small round Green label which meant it was a cash sale or a Red label which meant it was a rental.

Eventually when televisions became more reliable and the prices began to come down, the rentals started to become a bit quieter and we started to diversify into White goods such as fridges and washing machines.

Our shop in Stromness has also been in operation for over fifty years'.

(My thanks to Norman Mclennan who assisted in the OTE article) - Ed



Grundig – One of OTE's brands

There are quite a few other Television shops that have come and gone over the years.

Here is a list of some that come to mind. Readers will know of more I'm sure.

Orkney Radio and Electrical Co, Bridge Street, Kirkwall
Cordock Television
Donaldson Television, Victoria Street
Orkney Builders (believe it or not)
Woolworths
Grieve, Dounby
Alistair Learmonth

Magnus Pyke and the Crystal Set

by his sister

My thanks to Oliver Jacobs, who visited the Museum earlier this year, and sent this article written by his mother, about his uncle, television celebrity, Magnus Pyke. - Edit.

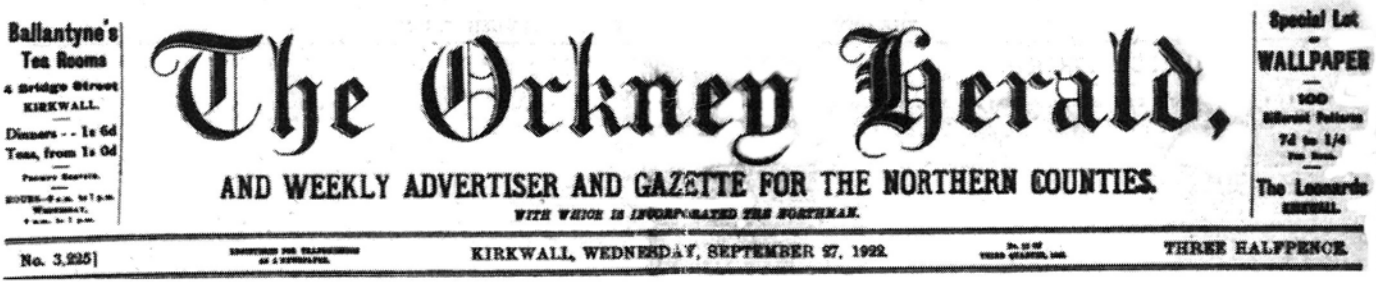
When London's first wireless station, 2LO, went on the air from Savoy Hill Magnus set about constructing a wireless receiving set in an open wooden box. He spent money given to him for his fourteenth birthday on a manual and on the copper wire, ball of string, crystal and microphone which it specified. He constructed a coil by winding the copper wire, with the string for insulation, round and round the cardboard central tube of a roll of lavatory paper. A cat's whisker from a small twist of the wire was positioned close to the crystal and the whole was wired up to the microphone, in conformity with the diagram in the manual. All that was then required then was an aerial and an earth.

Magnus went to call on Mr Henriques, known to our family and living more or less though not directly opposite, and was given permission to climb out on their roof, six storeys high like ours, to attach one end of a roll of wire to one of their chimney-pots. He then threw the roll down to the pavement below, retrieved it and, waiting until the road was clear, brought it across to our house where he attached it to the end of a piece of string that I had been deputed to dangle from the open window of Mother's bedroom on the third floor. I hauled the roll of wire up; Magnus climbed to the top of our house, out of the skylight on to our roof, tied another length of string round a chimney-pot and dangled the end over the front of the house for me to catch hold of. He joined me to exchange the first piece of string for the second by which, returned to the roof, he hauled the wire up to attach it to our chimney-pot. Then he took it down through the skylight, dropped it down the well of the staircase to the first floor and thence into the back drawing room (formerly Granny's bedroom), which was supplied with running water. There he attached the wire to the set as an aerial and wired the set to one of the taps as an earth.



Magnus Pyke

Everything was now ready but the instructions given in the manual did not seem to have been clear enough; not a sound was to be heard on the single earpiece microphone. At last, on Saturday 10th February 1923 as the school-girl's diary I kept that year recorded, "a friend of Mag's came and he managed to make Mag's wireless right. Great excitement". It was necessary to search with the cat's whisker for a sensitive spot on the crystal. Eventually a suitable spot was found: when the ear-piece was pressed close to the ear a faint voice could distinctly be heard talking. Some time later Magnus had enough money to buy a pair of headphones and, with the money he got for his fifteenth birthday, he bought a valve and a little loudspeaker which stood beside the wireless box. On Tuesday 25th February 1924 I recorded "Greenwich time broadcast direct from Greenwich at 9.30 p.m.". Two years later the set was to become a household asset, enabling us to listen to the official notices and bulletins which the Government arranged for the British Broadcasting Company (as it then was) to put out during the General Strike.


Ballantyne's Tea Rooms 4 Bridge Street KIRKWALL. Dinners - - 1s 6d Teas, from 1s 0d

The Orkney Herald,

AND WEEKLY ADVERTISER AND GAZETTE FOR THE NORTHERN COUNTIES.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE NORTHMAN.

Special Lot WALLPAPER 100 74 to 1/4 The Leonards

No. 3,225] KIRKWALL, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1922. THREE HALFPENCE.

My thanks to Museum volunteer Bruce Gorie for the following very early news cutting which he came across from the Orkney Herald. It dates from around the advent of the BBC in 1922

EARLY WIRELESS IN ORKNEY

To hear a person talk from Germany to Orkney is rather unbelievable, even by ordinary telephone, where the transmitting and receiving instruments are connected by wires, but when the transmitting and receiving stations have no apparent natural connection it takes a little convincing. Never-the- less, a wireless experimenter in Orkney has, on different occasions, picked up speech from one of the high-power German stations,. Broadcasting is a term used when messages are transmitted to stations all and sundry. A company has been formed, called the British Broadcasting Company, for the purpose of broadcasting weather reports, music, and any interesting information to all those who possess wireless receiving sets. At present there are only, as far as we know, two wireless experimenters in Orkney who have the Government licence for wireless experimentation. Seeing that the Broadcasting Company is to put up a station at Aberdeen and one at Edinburgh or Glasgow it is expected that many will take the opportunity to install as experiment 1 set and avail themselves of the advantages of the latest information, good music, weather reports, etc. Many will ask, 'What on earth is the use of a wireless set to me? To them the same reply can be given as a scientist gave after showing one of his great discoveries to a lady friend. When she asked 'What use is it for?' he replied, 'Of what use is a new born babe?'



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