The Society of the Friends of Orkney Wireless Museum



BULLETIN



Voluntary Interceptor
Helena Crawley

VOLUME: 30 No. 1 JULY 2021

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Hello and welcome to all our Friends once again.

In this second year of the Covid 19 outbreak I am pleased to say we have managed a limited opening of the Museum for the 2021 season.

Covid 19 presented a considerable challenge to the Directors of the Museum. It has meant having to take what has felt like some fairly draconian measures to ensure the safety of volunteers and visitors. This in turn made it quite difficult for our regular volunteers to return. We are a small building and this presented problems with the distancing rulings stipulated. In order to get our 'We're good to go' certificate showing we were following the Covid 19 guidelines we had to take the following measures:

> The entrance door was to remain open along with the kitchen window ensuring a free flow of air through the Museum. Masks had to be worn by the volunteers and visitors, with hand cleaning products available. Cleaning of surfaces had to be carried out regularly. The games section and wartime photo albums were retired along with a table and some chairs. Entry to visitors was free to avoid handling cash, but donations are gratefully received. The number of households permitted entry was also restricted, along with a recommended visit time of about 30 minutes, but longer if quiet. Visitors either signed a contact sheet or used their mobile phone to scan the 'Check Scotland app'. Lastly a Perspex screen was constructed around the volunteer's desk. These measures and others were taken to assure the public that we have considered all the guide lines and put them into action.

I have to admit it has been hard work for us all reaching this stage which was only made possible with the assistance of Robert Grieve and Kim Foden. At the time of writing we are open three afternoons during the week and on a Saturday. Visitor numbers this year have been fairly steady with the public on occasion willing to call back if the Museum is busy or even queue. Visitors understand that others may be waiting and are quite co-operative with the duration of their visits. As the Covid threat seems to be an ever changing situation we cannot assume that we will be open for all the Summer Season. On the brighter side visitors seem to very much enjoy the exhibits on display, including the new ones placed there in 2019/20. The new tall central cabinet has also drawn interest with two retired maths teachers admiring the calculators on display! This new cabinet came courtesy of Robert Foden of the Herald Printshop.



Our new tall central cabinet

Lastly a small get together was held recently at the Museum to unveil a photograph in the Amateur Radio Section of the displays. This photograph was to remember all the work carried out by Sandy Firth and the late Bill Wright in Amateur Radio over the years.



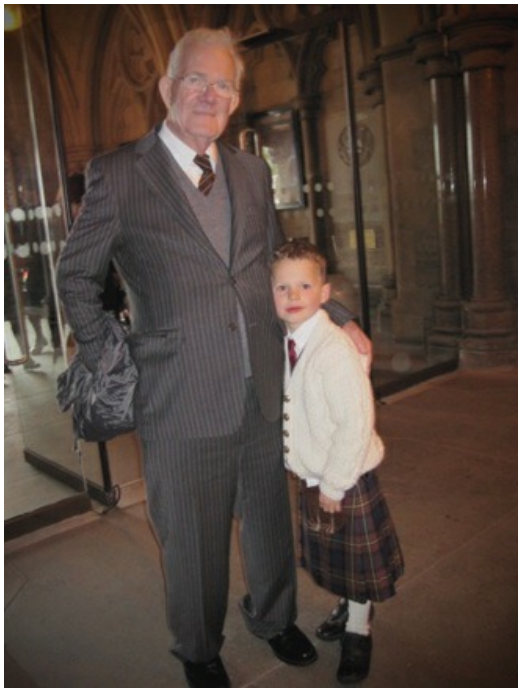
Sandy unveils the framed photograph



It is hoped that through time, restrictions will ease a bit to allow more volunteers and visitors to return to the Museum. PMcD

A generous donation

Alastair Muir from London sent a lovely package to the Museum containing a large quantity of valves and other pieces. I was particularly taken with the 'Philips Electrical Ltd' resistor kit in its display box as shown below, Alastair informed me - 'My father James Muir served in the Royal and Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, REME on his National Service and worked on Radar amongst other things. He always had a keen interest in the technology of the time and I remember as a child a steady stream of people coming to the house with radios and televisions for my dad to fix, which he always did, I don't think he ever turned anyone away. He did not have a personal connection to Orkney but I know he visited your Museum and had very much enjoyed it'.



James Muir and Grandson also called James



The Late Helena Crawley

Gardner Crawley

Voluntary Interceptor who spent three and half years listening to Abwher messages during WWII.

Helena Crawley (nee Savill), who has died aged 103, was a secretary and farmer who was asked to join the Radio Secret Service (RSS) at the start of World War Two as a Voluntary Interceptor (VI). RSS later became part of MI6.

Before they were married, Helena and her fiance Leslie Crawley were both keen radio hams (G2DDY and G3DT respectively). When war was declared they were contacted by John Clarricoats (secretary of Radio Society of Great Britain) who said they had to get married as he had a special job for a married couple.



This turned out to be as VIs who were to listen for enemy agents in Orkney. Leslie, who was in a reserved occupation as a civil engineer, was posted to Orkney by the Admiralty CinC's department to build naval air stations in December 1939 and Helena was able to join him. They lived in a “but and ben” cottage at Castlehill from March 1940 - August 1943 without running water or electricity. The radio aerial was a wire strung between the two chimneys so it wasn’t noticeable. In fact the sweep up of enemy agents was so effective VIs were soon assigned to monitor Morse code messages. At a RSS reunion Helena was told that the messages she monitored were from allied agents in occupied Europe. It later transpired at the first RSS reunion she attended, that she was listening to the Abwehr (German military intelligence) possibly with respect to Norway.

Helena Hope Savill was born in Stockwell on 25 August 1917. From Balgowan Girls’ Central School, Beckenham where she was Head Girl and was the only girl to get 4 credits in the Oxford School Certificate examinations (Arithmetic, English, History, Botany). Despite this she was unable to go to university as her father could not afford the fees and so became a trainee chemist with Parke Davis and Co, before joining W&T Henley & Sons as a secretary where she met Leslie. She joined RSGB and obtained her amateur radio licence to join Leslie in his hobby.



On one occasion Helena was shopping in Kirkwall and was offered a lift by the work camp canteen manager and his wife offered her lift. On the way home they pushed her out of the car. She was very frightened as she believed they were spies but managed to crawl away from the road and hid with her coat over her face. The car turned round and came back. Either they didn't see her or thought she was dead and drove off. Helena waited until they were out of sight and then flagged down an army lorry. Luckily she had her DR1 pass and asked the driver to take her straight to RNAS Twatt. Commander Rotherham (of Hunt the Bismark) said he would sort out the canteen manager and his wife and they disappeared.

Helena left Orkney in August 1943 when Leslie was posted to the Admiralty office in Bath, Somerset to help with the planning for the expected invasion of Japan.

After the War, Helena worked with Leslie in his Civil Engineering company in Kent. In 1975 they bought Tearnden Farm in Bethersden and built up a flock of Romney sheep together. After Leslie's death in 2000, she continued to farm until her death with the help of her grandson Alistair, winning the Romney Sheep Breeders Association Commercial Flock Prize.

For many years Helena was a member of the WRVS delivering Meals on Wheels to the surrounding area. As well as being Secretary of the local Conservative Association she hosted the Bethersden Guides and Malling Rotary Club at the farm.
Helena was always very free with her spatiality and her advice, often unsought she was drawn to people who needed help, even if they didn't realise it, becoming a surrogate “Mum” and “Gran” to many people from England and Netherlands. She is survived by her children; Gardner and Evaline, 5 grand children, 2 great-grandchildren, her many “adoptees” and their children.
(*The Friends bulletins of 2016 carried an article on Helena. Our condolences go to all the Family*) *Edit.*

A Generous Gesture

In 2019 we were saddened to hear of the death of Mr Ian Gall of Bridge of Don. Mr Gall had been a member of the Friends of Orkney Wireless Museum for some years and was a supporter of several organisations similar to ours. We then received news that Mr Gall had remembered us in his Will and that, along with several of those other organisations, we were to receive a bequest.

We now know that the amount is generous and that it more than enables us to cover the losses sustained during the period of closure in 2020 and 2021.

We remember Mr Ian Gall with the utmost gratitude and hope to be able to put something in the Museum to commemorate him.

Financial Position

As you will be aware, the Museum was not able to open at all in 2020 and its late and tentative opening for 2021 has also hit the finances. However, the financial position is secure and we have no cause for immediate concern.

At the start of the pandemic, our Treasurer assured us that we could remain closed for perhaps as much as five years and survive. Despite the fact that we had no income from admission tickets, we did well with sales of the new edition of *Churchill’s Prisoners.* We spent as little as possible and managed to keep our losses as small as possible. In addition to this, we have the bequest from Mr Gall (see above).

We cannot say that we are thriving, but we are secure for a considerable time.

What a man

(Memories of Bill—GM3IBU, and Operating GB2OWM from Orkney Wireless Museum Over the Years.)
by Edmund Holt—GM0WED

At the Wireless Museum, the antenna is a centre-fed doublet, fed by 300Ω ribbon feeder through a Z-match. It has an overall length of 75 feet, and can be seen running from a friendly neighbour's chimney stack to a convenient lamppost, thanks to the cooperation of the Council.

The site seems to have an unusually good take-off for transmitted signals for a site in a town, though it varies with the tides from day to day. Bill was convinced that being built on shingle, the salt water ingressed the porous ground underneath the Museum, and an antenna over salt water is always good—so when the tide is out, it tends to be not quite so good.

With the aid of the antenna matching unit (more on this later) it would work well on all the bands we wished to use.

When I first was involved with transmitting from the Museum in the late 1990s, it was an electrically quiet site: this means that there was very little electrical interference caused by neighbouring properties' electrical apparatus. This, however, was the golden age: the background noise was S2 or less. Over the next 20 years with new offices built nearby, plasma TVs (now banned, thank goodness), broadband interference on our frequencies, the harbour becoming busier with occasional welding operations and the like, the noise level rose steadily year on year to the present level of S9. What does S9 mean? Well, S9 is a full-strength signal, and so by 2017 the electrical noise generated by nearby electrical apparatus at the site now obliterated all but the very strongest signals, and whereas it had been possible to work the whole world twenty years ago, with a hundred and more contacts in a day, by 2017 we could hear a station provided it was in a car parked outside the Museum running high power! Not only Bill, but all the operators felt very frustrated by the pollution of our frequencies and at the moment operation is temporarily suspended.



Bill Wright - GM3IBU and Ed Holt - GM0WED during a special event operation at the Museum. The transmitter was Bill's own Yaesu FT101ZD Tranceiver

In the collection at the Museum, you will find Bill's Yaesu 101ZD transceiver donated by Ed - GM0WED. This is the radio which was used for all the operations from the Orkney Wireless Museum during Bill's time. In its day, this radio was a world leader, and indeed, they are still used and are highly prized in any amateur's shack. It is a hybrid radio, using both valves and transistors, and it has the reputation of still producing some of the best quality side-band (phone/speech) signals. Obviously, today, the technology is considered by the progressive as out of date, but it still works, and one has to wonder how many modern all bells and whistles radios will be working this well when they are 30+ years old?

The Antenna Matching Unit (AMU)

This matching unit belonged to Bill - GM3IBU and was donated to the Museum by Ed - GM0WED

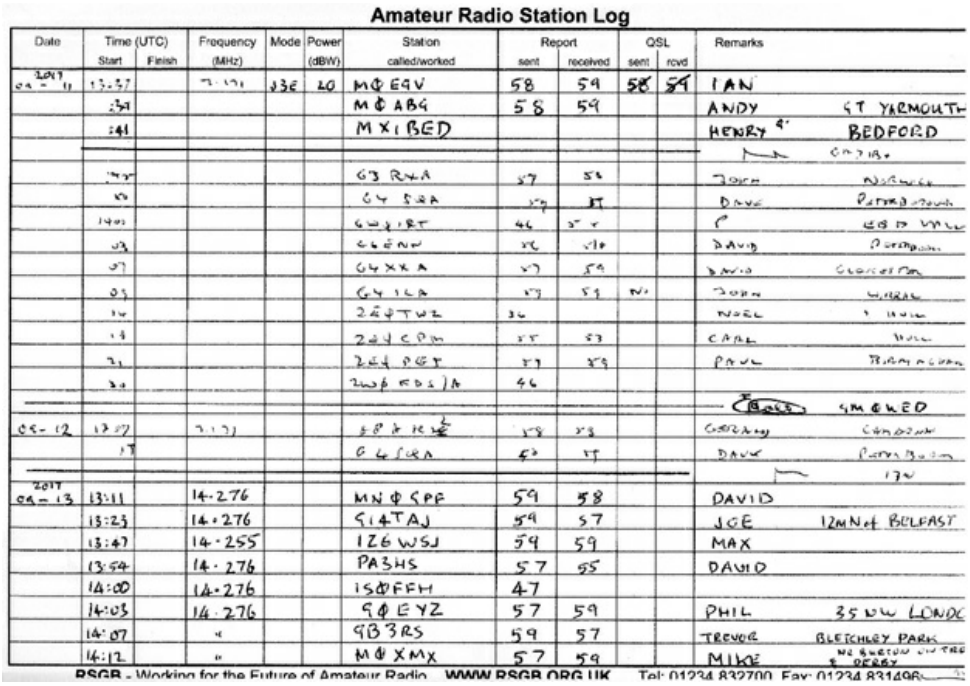
An antenna needs to be the right length for the frequency of the signal transmitted; for example, for the dipole antenna to radiate efficiently on 7·150 Mhz the antenna would have to be about 65·5 feet (19·9 metres) overall length, whereas our antenna is 75 feet (22.8m). Also, to radiate efficiently at 14·250MHz it would need to be about 32ft 9 in (10 m). So, you can see that the antenna needs to be of variable length. If one tries to transmit on the wrong length of wire the impedance (resistance to the signal being outputted by the transmitter) is so high that it would damage the transmitter; so, one would need elastic wire or have to keep popping outside to change the antenna wire with each band change. An AMU, however, is one way of overcoming this problem, and is a clever piece of kit which alters the impedance presented by the wrong length of wire and allows the transmitter to use almost any length of wire for the antenna. (There is slightly more to it than this, but for the layman, this is probably enough information.) The AMU is to the left of the transmitter, and is one which Bill himself built; over the years it has served us well.

Other Equipment

This all belonged to Bill - GM3IBU and was donated to the Museum by Ed - GM0WED

The microphone and the switch are all as were used during the operations from the Museum. Because the station is supposed to be 'open and accessible' to the public, there was a small loudspeaker through which those in the Museum could monitor the conversations.

With this early type of radio, logging the calls, which was a requirement of the licensing authority, had to be done by hand, and below is a copy of the log book page showing Bill's last contact (QSO) from the Museum, which was on the 40m band at 14:12 GMT on 13/9/2017 with Mike—M0XMX. The writing is mine, but the operator was Bill, and you can just see his signature squiggle under the details of the call with M0XMX.



Amateur Radio Station Log

Date	Time (UTC) Start	Time (UTC) Finish	Frequency (MHz)	Mode	Power (dBW)	Station called/worked	Report sent	Report received	QSL sent	QSL rcvd	Remarks	
2017 09-11	13:37		7.171	J3E	20	MØEGV	58	59	58	59	IAN	
	:39					MØABG	58	59			ANDY	GT YARMOUTH
	:41					MX1BED					HENRY	BEDFORD
	[illegible]					G3RXA	57	58			JOHN	[illegible]
	[illegible]					G4SQA	57	57			DAVE	[illegible]
	1400					G4XIRT	46	[illegible]			P	[illegible]
	03					G6ENN	56	[illegible]			DAVID	[illegible]
	07					G4XXA	57	59			DAVID	[illegible]
	09					G4ICA	57	59	No		JOHN	[illegible]
	14					2E4TWZ	36				NOEL	[illegible]
	18					2E4CPM	55	53			CARL	[illegible]
	21					2E4PGT	57	59			PAUL	[illegible]
	30					2WØKDS/A	46					
												GM0WED
09-12	13:07		7.171			[illegible]	58	59			[illegible]	[illegible]
	17					G4SQA	57	57			DAVE	[illegible]
												17N
2017 09-13	13:11		14.276			MNØSPF	59	58			DAVID	
	13:23		14.276			GI4TAJ	59	57			JOE	12MN of BELFAST
	13:47		14.255			IZ6WSJ	59	59			MAX	
	13:54		14.276			PA3HS	57	55			DAVID	
	14:00		14.276			ISØFFH	47					
	14:03		14.276			GØEYZ	57	59			PHIL	35NW LONDO
	14:07		"			GB3RS	59	57			TREVOR	BLETCHLEY PARK
	14:12		"			MØXMX	57	59			MIKE	NE BURTON ON TRE & DERBY

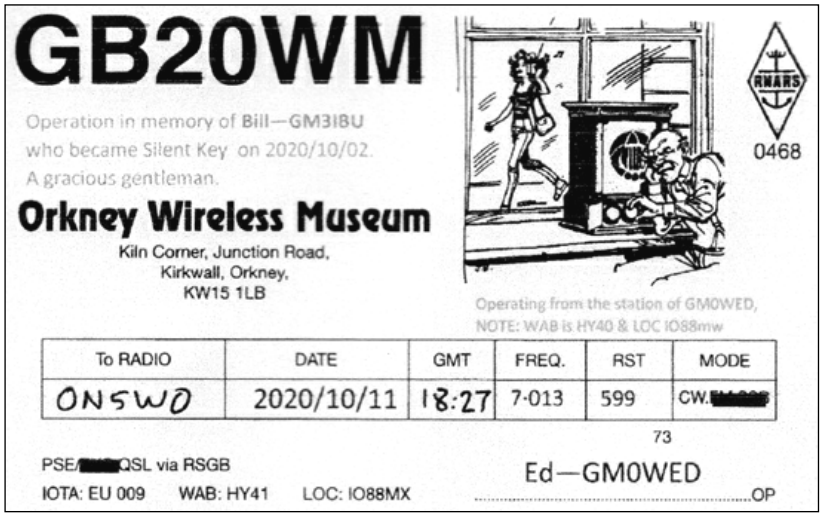
RSGB - Working for the Future of Amateur Radio WWW.RSGB.ORG.UK Tel: 01234 832700 Fax: 01234 831496

Sometimes radio amateurs send a card, like a post card, to the stations which they have contacted, which confirms the date, time, frequency mode (Morse or phone) to the stations which they have contacted. It was Bill's practice to send every contact a card, known as a QSL card, This is quite an undertaking if a lot of contacts are made, but Bill had the whole process organised in a production line, such as: himself on the radio making the contact, Ed writing in the log book the details of the contact, and Robert at the end of the line writing out the QSL card ready for sending. This whole process required three people to run smoothly, and by the end of the day's operating, the cards only needed checking, which Bill usually did at home after the event, then off they went round the world through the radio amateur's network of distribution.

To have its own call, the Wireless Museum applied for 'club' status, and got the call sign GM0OWM, but as the station really only operates on special occasions, unlike an amateur who can operate all day and all night, We applied for a 'special event call'. These are calls which have the prefix GB, and this catches the attention of other operators. Most often, a special event can ask for a pertinent call sign on a temporary basis, such as GB4RAF if it was an operation at an RAF station for example, and they are valid for 28 days. But Bill asked if we could get GB2OWM as a permanent allocation, and uniquely, at that time, the request was granted and the Museum became I believe the first permanent GB special call to be awarded - if it wasn't the first, it certainly was one of the first.

I learned a lot from Bill, who was always meticulous at the beginning of a session in asking: "Is this frequency in use; is this frequency occupied?" and changing frequency if a "Yes" came back. This was good practice for a fairly inexperienced amateur to learn at that time. Our usual 40m transmit frequency was around 7.176Mc/s.

We really had to stop operating in 2017 because the noise levels had become so loud, but Covid-19 has had one beneficial effect. Normally the station must be open to the public and may only operate from the location of the special event, but with the Museum being closed, as is the case with just about every other special event, Ofcom, who issue the licences gave exceptional permission for special call stations to operate from other near-by locations, without public access, and so I went on air in late October and made over 500 contacts using GB2OWM. The operation was in memory of Bill, and it was surprising how many people looked up his call sign and said that they had 'worked' him. Below is a copy of the card which I sent to all those stations which contacted me during this operation from my home QTH using the Museum call sign.


GB20WM

Operation in memory of Bill—GM3IBU
who became Silent Key on 2020/10/02.
A gracious gentleman.

Orkney Wireless Museum
Kiln Corner, Junction Road,
Kirkwall, Orkney,
KW15 1LB

RNARS 0468

Operating from the station of GM0WED,
NOTE: WAB is HY40 & LOC IO88mw

To RADIO	DATE	GMT	FREQ.	RST	MODE
ONSWO	2020/10/11	18:27	7·013	599	CW.

73

PSE/ QSL via RSGB

IOTA: EU 009 WAB: HY41 LOC: IO88MX

Ed—GM0WED

.....OP

In November, the Hungarians ran a 'Silent Key Memorial' Activity. This takes the form of stations contacting each other over a period of four hours, and the exchange the call sign of a departed amateur. Silent Key, refers to the Morse key, which is no longer in use because of the passing of the person to whom it was issued. It was good to be able to use Bill's call in the exchange, and saddening to hear other familiar call signs of stations all over the world which I had contacted, but which were now silent key too.

Bill's interest in radio was also reflected in the stations he set up for the Scouts, the Girl Guides (GB2OW) called Viking Weekend, the Air Show, the 500th Anniversary of the granting of the Royal Charter to Kirkwall,(GB2RBK - Royal Borough of Kirkwall)) which operated from the Town Hall, and many others. The one with which I was particularly involved was the one which follows.

When the new St Andrews Primary School (incorporating the former St Andrews Primary School and Holm West Primary School) opened, it was decided that Bill and I would put on an amateur radio station to mark the opening, with the callsign GB0DHS (Deerness, Holm and St Andrews). We decided that the best option was to erect an inverted Vee antenna from the east end of the building. This was before the later extensions. The original smaller hall had a drooping roof at the eastern end, which made it look like the nose of Concorde. The roof overhang was quite a few feet, and it was held up with an array of metal supports, ideal for erecting a pulley to raise up an antenna.

We approached the council and were refused permission to go up a ladder to affix the pulley to the metalwork, because neither of us had the necessary training and qualification to (in those days) go above 9 feet up a ladder, but we could hire the Council to put up the antenna, at the prohibitive cost of over £100 (each visit), which in those days was a lot of money for the two of us to bear, and that was only on the condition that they would come if they had time, and it was made clear that this was doubtful.

A plan was hatched with Bill, and on the day the operation was due to start, we both went out to the school with our equipment, only to find that somehow, overnight, a few nights before the operation, a pulley had appeared in place, held up with a rope secured to the ground, and through the pulley was installed a convenient halyard to which we could tie the centre of the antenna and raise it.

Nobody said a word, and at the end of the operation, the antenna was lowered and packed away, and the halyard let go from the ground, and down came the pulley and halyard, with no trace left.

All I can say, is that I suspect that there were two tired radio amateurs who woke up one morning a few days before the operation—who they were, neither I nor Bill, of course, could say.

Bill was the 'control' for RAYNET (Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network) for many years. And we helped the Police, Hoy Half Marathon, and many other activities over the years with their emergency communications. After he retired as Control, he was out and about with RAYNET wherever we went until very recently. When he felt no longer able to risk coming, for example, to Hoy for the day, he would monitor our transmissions, and when necessary relay messages when one of the out stations could not hear another.

As an amateur, he was a most generous man, and was always willing to lend equipment to those struggling with something, usually on the basis of "I'll get it back sometime." Bill was an example to us all, a gracious gentleman.

In the range of his radio activities he was modest, and you had to dig to find out what he had done, which was just about everything. Right up to the end, he was trying out the new technologies and building little bits of equipment to enhance the commercial equipment.
What a man indeed.



Bill and Anne Wright at an early special event station

Filling the Gap

Kim Foden

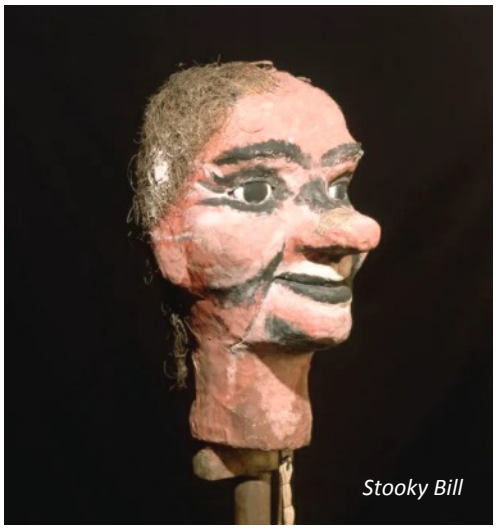
Originally set up to fill a gap and keep the museum on the map while we were closed due to the pandemic, The Orkney Wireless Museum Facebook page has been running for almost a year. The page is diverse, from photo albums of items in our store to my 70th birthday cake shaped like a radio!

Television's arrival in the county was covered at Christmas with an item from The Orkney Herald dated 23rd December, 1958.
A special flight by a BEA Pionair from Aberdeen on Saturday brought over 60 television sets for Kirkwall dealers already working against the clock to complete installations before yesterday's switch-on of Orkney's new TV station at Netherbutton. Viewers in their homes - and the crowds milling around the radio shops in Kirkwall - saw the lady announcer yesterday afternoon welcome TV's new audience in Orkney.



Our April Fool, Operation Barber, created our largest number of views and almost provided Orkney's tour guides with another "must tell" for their tours. Fortunately/unfortunately, we were rumbled. Apart from it being a nutty ploy, to use barbed wire round huge fields as aerials above an underground listening post for undercover surveillance of the Russian space programme, some readers may have recognised son, Alistair, as the "Soviet sympathiser" found living in Stenness.

Stooky Bill created interest when we covered his story. John Logie Baird's early studio experiments with television required large bright lamps. Unfortunately, humans couldn't work in the heat they emitted, so Stooky Bill came to the rescue.


Stooky Bill

He was a dummy head which could withstand the heat and didn't object to his features being painted, exaggerated and even rearranged to suit.
Poor Stooky Bill was simply discarded when experiments moved on, and on 9th November, 1936 BBC Television made its first public transmission (officially).

Wobbulators and Woodpecker, smallest pocket radio, big valves and little valves have all been covered on our Facebook page over the months. I've learned much from trying to put these things into words.



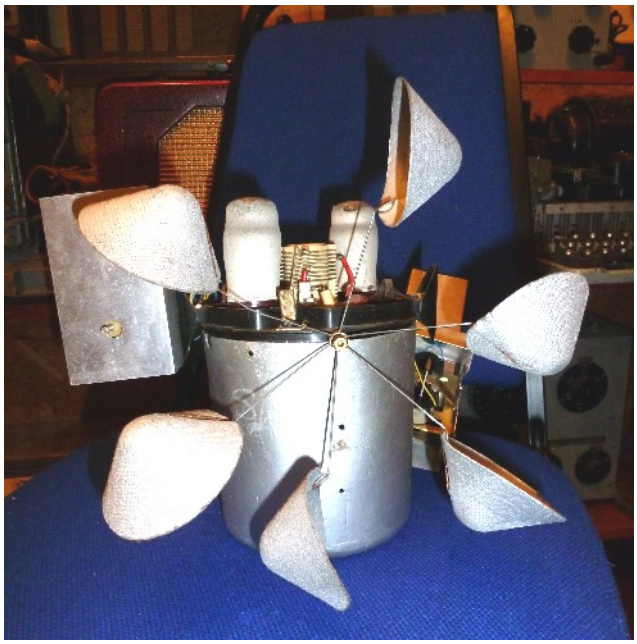
Midland Ready Rescue Kit

We have been proud to post some of our recent donations on the page, one of which is a Midland Ready Rescue kit, a 2 way, 40 channel CB radio and mag. mount. A handy set to have in the car in the days before mobile phones. Another donation is a Murphy B40 HF communications receiver which, I believe, once belonged to Orkney Sea Cadets. Made for shipboard use, they were built like a battleship. Being used by the Navy in the late 1950s, they were strong, easy to use and had to stay on frequency when the ship fired its guns! It weighs 114 pounds. Coverage is continuous from 600 kHz to 30 Mhz in 5 ranges. The vertical frequency display gives the front of the set a distinct appearance, hence the set is often referred to as the lighthouse or tower receiver.

As I write this, we are working hard on trying to open up the museum during these trying times. Hopefully, visitors will be able to come along to see some of the items covered, including our new cabinet of curios. A strange, spindly object sits on the top shelf and is, I'm told, part of a meteorological instrument carried on a weather balloon some years ago. Beside this object is a hand-operated early motion picture viewer which worked like a flip book using monochrome photographic prints. The Kinora viewer was a French invention, marketed in the UK in the early 1900s.



Murphy B40 HF "Tower" Receiver


Anemometer, for measuring wind speeds from a Weather Balloon

There are so many interesting objects in our collection and I'll try to keep posting on Facebook. But, better still, come and see them in the museum if possible.

Find us on Facebook at The Orkney Wireless Museum

AN AMAZING DONATION

It was my recent pleasure to meet Andy Rackham from West Yorkshire with whom I had arranged to accept a 19 set which he was bringing up to Orkney.



Andy had mentioned that he had another piece of equipment which had belonged to his father, Les Rackham, which he was interested in donating to the Museum. When I met him he held out a plastic bag which contained nothing less than a WW2 RAF leather Flying helmet and mask! I have to admit to being a bit overwhelmed at his generosity in offering such a marvellous item. It must rank as one of the most prized bits of equipment we have received at the Museum. At the time of writing plans are afoot to put it in one of our display cabinets for the public to enjoy.

Andy Rackham wearing his dads flying helmet





Andy's father Les Rackham

Les was a young airman who was later commissioned in Canada. After de-mob Les obtained his civil pilots licences which resulted in a long flying career for over 50 years. Flying 20,783 hours, 81 aircraft types and conducting 1380 instructor tests.

Cold War Communication – or the lack of it.

By Len Wilson.

It was the summer of 1960 and at the height of the Cold War between the Soviet Bloc and the West. Russia had recently shot down the American U2 high altitude spy plane and captured the pilot, Gary Powers. East and West were on high alert.

Despite the tense political situation it was business as usual in the commercial world. In June of that year I signed on as Radio Officer on *MV Longfellow* in Burntisland, to load a cargo of timber in northern Russia for Leith.



m.v. "Longfellow," Leith 1960. Radio Officer, Len Wilson.

Our Latvian seaman was afraid the Russians would abduct him, so he opted to wait in Leith for our return.

On departure, the skipper gave me a message for the agent in Moscow containing the details of our voyage. That summer we suffered an intense period of high sunspot activity, making short wave communication extremely difficult. Unable to make contact with any Russian radio station, I sent it to Portishead Radio for onward transmission by landline to Moscow.

The voyage went well. It was beautiful glassy calm weather with a very long low swell rolling in from the west. In a few days we were north of the Arctic Circle and in permanent daylight, indeed, permanent sunshine. As we rounded the North Cape I could hear the Murmansk coastal radio station loud and clear and gave him a call. UMV UMV UMV de MQQN.....no reply. As we got nearer I persisted, but even within sight of the station there was no reply. I concluded they were under instruction not to communicate with foreigners.

Skipper was informed but he had no options but to continue to the pilot station at the entrance to the Kola Inlet, still 26 miles from Murmansk harbour. We lay there for an hour but there was no sign of life either on shore or afloat. UMV was still ignoring me.

At this point we continued to the inner pilot station several miles further on, passing the Russian Fleet lying in a bay to the east …….and, would you believe it, they ignored us too. So much for Soviet Cold War security - and I didn't have the presence of mind to grab my camera!

After another hour at the inner station our skipper decided to proceed without a pilot. Murmansk was still not visible for it lay round a bend several miles ahead. Suddenly, when we were within a mile of the headland, a fast launch appeared. Half a dozen menacing uniformed officers, weighed down with gold braid, climbed the boarding ladder demanding to know what we were doing there. After they inspected our papers they accepted, with extreme embarrassment, that there had been a breakdown of communication on their part. They never got the Moscow message, but they were more embarrassed that a western ship was almost able to enter their harbour unchallenged.

Next day another foreigner arrived, a German ship from Archangel with a deck cargo of timber that had shifted, giving her a dangerous list. The crew were taken ashore and by next morning their ship had

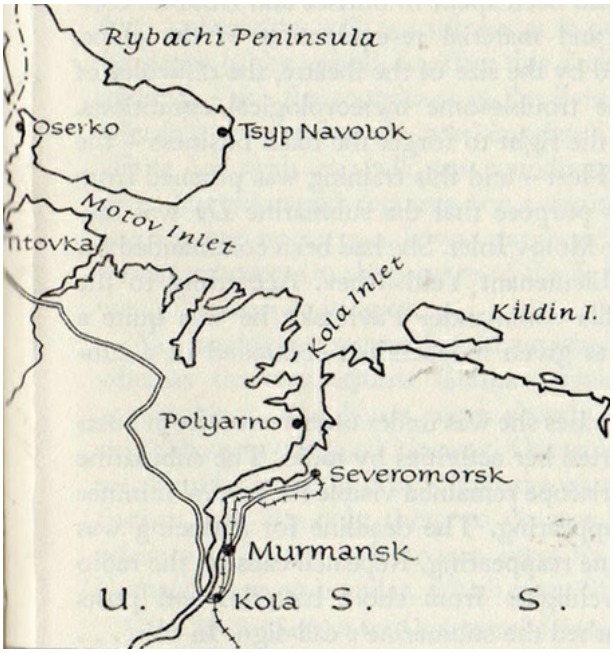
turned over to lie on her side on the bottom of the harbour. Her skipper was concerned that the Russian authorities might confiscate his ship's papers, so he made copies for our skipper to take out. Also, the skipper's sixteen-year-old son, Claus, was allowed to travel home with us. We were heading for Germany after Leith.

We were well catered for at the Murmansk Seaman's Club, probably so that they could keep an eye on us, and to make a good impression. A display board was plastered with photos of Gary Powers and the wreckage of his plane, and they were selling Robbie Burns bi-centenary stamps. We had a bus tour of the city and surrounding area and we were free to roam around, tailed by a couple of KGB men following at a discrete distance. There was a dance one night where none of the girls spoke English. The jovial English speaking Russian who joined us for a drink every night was probably planted there too.

We sailed a week later, with a pilot on board. I was back on air to advise of our departure. UMV UMV UMV de MQQN MQQN MQQN TR..... SILENCE.

I never did get a response from a Russian radio station.





Claus and third mate, Mr Jones, in Leith Docks.

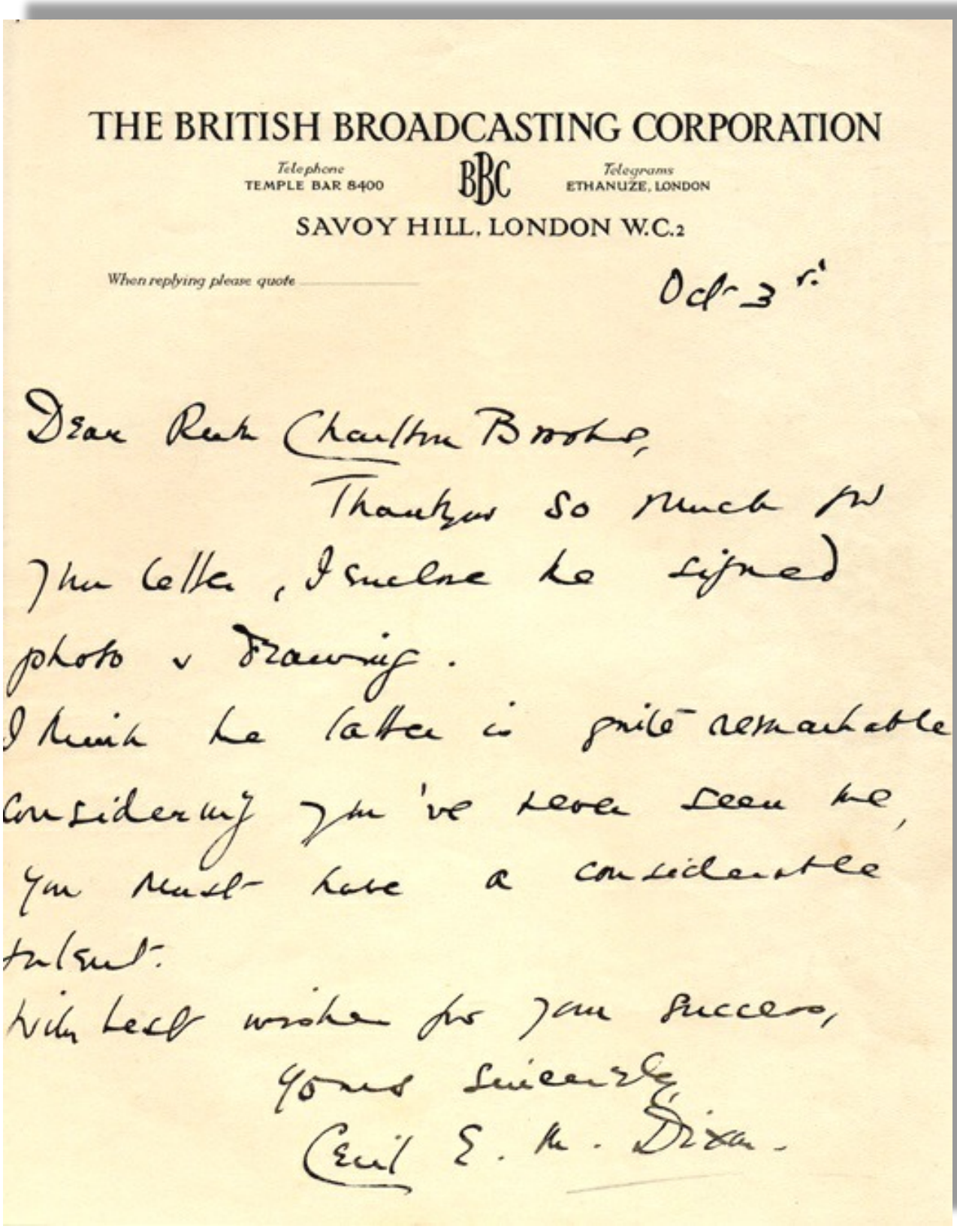


1958 Radio Amateur, QSL card, sent during the cold war. (from the Museum collection).

A remarkable find

Some years ago the museum received a donation of some early radio publications. Inside one publication, a 1934 edition of 'Radio Magazine' I found inserted the following original Letter and photograph of Cecil Dixon who is described as 'The Official BBC Accompanist in innumerable Programmes'. This little time capsule is a wonderful flash back to the heyday of radio when it ruled supreme and its presenters would have been stars to their listeners.





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When replying please quote _____

Oct 3rd

Dear Rear Charlton Brooke,

Thankyou so much for the letter, I enclose the signed photo & drawing.

I think the latter is quite remarkable considering you've never seen me, you must have a considerable talent.

With best wishes for you success,

Yours sincerely,

Cecil E.M. Dixon.

Translation:

Dear ……. Charlton Brooke. Thank you so much for the letter, I enclose the signed photo and Drawing. I think the latter is quite remarkable considering you've never seen me. You must have a considerable talent. With best wishes for you success, Yours sincerely, Cecil E.M. Dixon.