

## Friends of St Ninian's Newsletter September 2010



The Friends of St Ninian's (FOSN) purchased the St Ninian's Kirk, Deerness in June 2008. Every event that takes place there, some sad, some joyous, underlines that it was the right thing to do.

In 2009 FOSN became a company limited by guarantee with 12 directors (listed at the end of this newsletter) and in 2010 became a registered charity, SC40794.

FOSN's aims and objectives are:

- to advance the education of the public in Orkney and elsewhere, in the history of St Ninian's Church and the historical, cultural and social development of the local community
- to use the St Ninian's building as a community resource for religious, artistic, cultural, educational and social activities
- to maintain the building of St Ninian's Church and preserve its heritage for the benefit of the community, and
- to maintain the building's integrity as a place of worship; establish and maintain a community space for activities including musical events, craft and educational workshops, exhibitions and social functions; to carry out any other activities in furtherance of the above objects.

The aim is to work with Deerness's other organisations, and this has worked well, particularly with the highly successful exhibition 'In Time of War' held in the Deerness Hall in September 2009 and the St Magnus Festival events of 2009 and 2010. Nine Deerness organisations were involved in "In Time of War" and each shared equally in the monies raised by the event. In all corners of Deerness, attics and cupboards were searched for wartime memorabilia, and an amazing variety of precious exhibits were generously loaned for the event.

Next year sees a European Rural Development Programme promotion "Scotland's Islands - a celebration of Scotland's islands' culture", scheduled for Spring 2011 to Spring 2012, and FOSN hope to be able to put together a contribution, possibly in the form of another community exhibition.

May 2010 saw the first wedding in the Kirk for some years. Cheryl Campbell married Daniel Gould and St Ninian's looked lovely with the wedding decorations, and the brass lamps gleaming. Many of the guests had not previously been in the church and were charmed by it. There were new planters at the doorways, fresh paint on the repaired windows and doors, and an amazing pair of curtains, hid the eyesore of the hallway walls! The session room looked most welcoming with a rug, and paintings on the walls.

After such a happy occasion, sadly, the next was to be the funeral of Bill Foulis of Horraquoy. With his passing Deerness has lost a true friend of St Ninian's. On the day of the funeral, a beautiful sunny afternoon, as the mourners came out in to the cemetery, it was most timely that a white yacht was seen making good speed north with a fair wind, out beyond the Skerries. Sadly two more friends of St Ninian's were lost in the months following, Molly Foulis, Bill's widow, and Nan Matches nee Petrie.

In June St Ninian's hosted its second St Magnus Festival concert this time with the Royal Quartet with Andrzej Bauer, all from Poland, playing Schubert's String Quintet in C major. The concert was recorded by the BBC for Radio 3, and was broadcast in July. The BBC production team was highly complimentary about the acoustic in St Ninian's. A wonderful team of volunteers assisted FOSN with the catering for the Festival audience back at the hall (over 180 folk fed and watered in an hour). Thanks to all concerned.

In July, Deerness celebrated Meg Harrold's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday....and how! St Ninian's was used for a concert given by musicians from all over Orkney invited by Meg and how splendid it was to hear the rafters ring with such an array of talent, young and old, on a beautiful summer's evening. The evening's entertainment continued back at the Hall just as joyously. Meg had asked that instead of presents, donations be made to St Ninian's and over £950 was given.

The families of Bill and Molly Foulis, and Nan Matches, had also asked that donations, either all or in part, be given to St Ninian's at the respective funeral services, and a further £1100 was donated. FOSN will keep all such gifts separate from their own fund-raising income, and will use these monies in consultation with the families concerned.



Renovations to the building continue, and FOSN were successful in being awarded a maximum grant of £8000 by Orkney Islands Council's Heritage Fund in March 2010. Unsightly electricity cables have been moved underground and a new trip switch system installed, with more re-wiring to be done. All main windows have been repaired and painted externally. The interior's damp problems are major and will need careful handling. Thanks go to John Winstanley of the West Manse for his professional advice thus far. FOSN welcomes all offers of assistance, both professional and amateur, with this ongoing work on the building.

In 2008 & 2009 FOSN supported Dr James Barrett of Cambridge University and his excavations on the Brough of Deerness. Because of family commitments, there was no digging this season, but it is hoped to continue in 2011. Meantime Dr Barrett has provided the material for a new interpretation board at the Mull Head Interpretation Centre. This has been put together by FOSN, working with SNH, OIC and the County Archaeologist, Julie Gibson, and the finished board, designed by Ian Ashman, is now in place, and well worth a visit.

In September, St Ninian's takes part in the Doors Open scheme and will be open on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September from 10 till 4. (At any other time, arrangements can be made to open the kirk. The main key holder is Laurence Irvine at Symbister, Deerness, tel: 741304)

FOSN would welcome any material which can be lent for display in the Kirk for Doors Open Day, and any information for the records. Please contact Anne Billing on 741360 about this.

On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October & Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, FOSN will be holding the first event in their "Recording the Place Names of Deerness" project, in the Hall. The aim is to make a record of Deerness's place-names – farms, houses, shore, roads, fields, and features in the landscape – and everyone is invited to get involved, to contribute to and learn more of Deerness's story.

FOSN is very pleased to announce that Mrs Denise Brown of Old School House Deerness, has kindly agreed to take on the post of Membership Secretary and membership forms are now available which set out subscription rates etc. Membership is welcome from all, whether they have Deerness connections or not, who would like to support this endeavour.

FOSN's first AGM will take place on Wednesday 22 September at 8p.m in the Committee Room of the Deerness Hall and will be open to all.



All offers of assistance from keeping the planters fed and watered at the Kirk and helping with repairs, to thinking up ideas for events and projects will be very much appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch for more information. Contact details for Board members are below.

*The Friends of St Ninian's Board of Directors:*

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**Membership Secretary: Denise Brown, Old School House, Deerness KW17 2QL**