

Aglooka Advisor

Autum / Winter 2017

Issue No. 6

The
John Rae
Society



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The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board of Trustees of the John Rae Society.



A Word from our President

Dear Members,

Like all years for the John Rae Society, it has been a busy one, but this has been exceptional.

We followed up our highly successful John Rae Festival in May with another extraordinary long weekend at the end of September to celebrate John Rae's 204th birthday. Dr Claire Warrior, Senior Exhibitions Curator at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, delivered a splendid lecture on their current exhibition, *Death in the Ice: The Shocking Story of Franklin's Final Expedition*, which pulled in a capacity audience at Stromness Town Hall. The weekend also saw the conferring of the distinction and honour of a Posthumous Freeman of Orkney on Dr Rae, our traditional graveside ceremony at St Magnus Cathedral, and two open afternoons at the Hall of Clestrain.

This time it was possible to show visitors in small groups around the interior of the Hall, thanks to the pigeon guano having been removed by Casey Construction in June. It was wonderful to see folk's expressions of delight at our progress and ambitions. They fully took on the enormity of our future tasks, and I'm sure we have won much willing support. We would like to thank Ivan and Jean Craigie for the use of their garage and Paddy Casey for the loan of the portable toilets.

Two first-time visitors to Orkney, Ian and Jocelyn Ritchie, came at the behest of Dr Barbara Rae. My wife, Sigrid, and I entertained them for an evening and more. Ian was so taken with the Hall of

Clestrain that he did much photography there. His art and architectural works are world-renowned. To help sponsor JRS they kindly bought from the Canadian Broadcasting Company a copy of John Walker's astounding 2008 film, *Passage*. We now have the rights to show this film anywhere we wish to raise funds for JRS and we screened the film at the Orkney Theatre as part of the birthday weekend. Ian and Jocelyn also created a wonderful photographic artwork of the Hall of Clestrain at sunset. This has been used on the cover of the CD mentioned below. We can use it for other merchandise as well and are very grateful.

Two regular summer visitors, Geordie and Alison McIntyre, offered to record their traditional-style folk song, *Hudson Bay Man*, with another of their compositions on a short CD for JRS. This was launched at Stromness Town Hall, before Dr Warrior's lecture. We sold many of these CDs for £5.00 each to raise money for the Hall of Clestrain and we still have a further hundred.

In addition to these events, we have had a Royal visit, continued to add to our membership, held our AGM – at which we elected two new Trustees and welcomed back three existing Trustees – and started to plan our 2018 events! You can read about all these happenings in this newsletter, plus some fascinating articles from our wide and talented membership. We are grateful to Martin Atherton, Bernie Bell, Michael Crabbe, Geordie McIntyre and Astrid Ogilvie for sending us reports on their research, news and thoughts on John Rae and Arctic exploration.

To end our strenuous 2017 season, a letter from Canada dropped through my letterbox.

The cheque within astonished me: I asked Sigrid to count the noughts and it came to £40k! This was an exceptional donation from a Scottish lady who now resides in Canada and will assure the purchase of the Hall well before the allotted time.

As ever, my thanks go to a very hard-working Board of Trustees, Committee members and volunteers, and to you, our devoted members.

Yours aye,



Andrew Appleby



John Rae's Birthday Celebrations

29th September to 1st October 2017

This year's birthday celebrations for John Rae were considerably more complex than the previous year's free party with live music! A combination of events came together into a weekend of celebration of Dr John Rae's 204th birthday.

The first of these was a talk by Dr Claire Warrior who is Senior Exhibitions Curator of the National Maritime Museum,



Claire Warrior, Rachel Boak and Alice Jane Hamilton at the Hall of Clestrain

Greenwich, where the current exhibition, Death in the Ice: The Shocking Story of Franklin's Final Expedition, is on the ill-fated Franklin expedition. We invited Dr Warrior to give a talk on this exhibition developed by the Canadian Museum of History (CMH) in partnership with the NMM and Parks Canada, and in collaboration with the Government of Nunavut and the Inuit Heritage Trust, for which she was academic adviser. It was held on Friday 29th September at Stromness Town Hall, along with the launch and performance of songs from a new CD, Hudson Bay Man, by Geordie McIntyre and Alison McMorland. The event was very well attended, so much

so that we had to put out extra chairs as people kept arriving! The evening finished with the ubiquitous raffle, one of the prizes being the now expected donation, by our President, of a pineapple!



Harvey Johnston, James Stockan and Ruth Matches at the Freedom of Orkney ceremony

The next day, Saturday 30th September, we all arrived by Ian Scott's statue of John Rae in Stromness for Orkney Islands Council's posthumous presentation of the Freedom of Orkney to Dr John Rae. The weather gods were smiling on us with blue skies and sunshine as Convener Harvey Johnston read a speech and poem he had penned about the great man. There was even a communal response to his speech and, as every one of the not inconsiderable crowd ended up calling out 'John Rae' several times, the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end! Harvey Johnston's words were followed by an earnest and thought-



provoking speech by Council Leader, James Stockan. The award was presented to the great-great-great niece of John Rae, Ruth Matches. It was a very emotional ceremony, concluded by

Jennifer Wrigley playing 'Air for Dr John Rae' on John Rae's fiddle from Stromness Museum. I'm not sure whether the wind blowing in the eyes of the crowd was responsible for the tears, but I suspect it was more than that!

After the ceremony it was a dash over to Kirkwall for the traditional graveside



commemoration, while a few of us went to the Hall of Clestrain to get things



ready for the open afternoon. At John Rae's graveside a poem was read out and a dram of whisky was poured on the grave while

piiper, Diana Kelday, of the Kirkwall City Pipe Band, played.

Afterwards the Maureen Findlay School of Dance danced the John Rae Reel outside St Magnus Cathedral.

Saturday afternoon was busy with visitors to the Hall of Clestrain who took the opportunity to be shown around and inside the Hall by our Trustees to explain our plans for its future. We had a great turnout of over sixty people, helped by the amazing weather. Tea, coffee and cakes were on offer while people chatted and looked at plans and a rolling presentation

about the project. We were very grateful for help from volunteers, Kevin and Anne.

On *Saturday evening* we held a film show in the Orkney Theatre in Kirkwall of John Walker's 2008 film *Passage* as we have



been given the rights to show the film by Ian and Jocelyn Ritchie to help raise money for the Hall restoration. Our annual lottery was also drawn with a range of prizes going to winners in Orkney, the wider UK and abroad.

On *Sunday afternoon* we were back at the Hall again, although the weather had by now turned quite nasty with high winds, rain and low cloud. While sheltering from the worst of the weather, we watched the hills of Hoy, Graemsay and then Stromness disappear from view, and there was one point when it looked like the Hall would not be visible! Despite this, about twenty brave souls turned up to be shown around the Hall and they were all very interested in our plans and very generous in their donations.

The birthday weekend events and Freedom of Orkney ceremony featured on BBC Radio Orkney, BBC Radio 4, the Visit Orkney website, as well as in the pages of *The Orcadian* and *The Orkney News*. Our website and Facebook pages were also

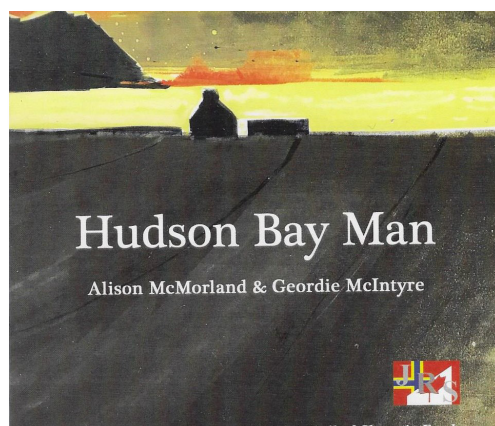
very busy. Although the weekend involved a lot of work for a small band of people, we feel it was very successful and would like to express our thanks to Dr Claire Warrior, Stromness Museum, Orkney Islands Council and the Cuminga Charitable Trust for their support of these events. Thank you too to everyone who came along to the



events and open afternoons and who gave so generously towards the restoration of the Hall of Clestrain.

Mark Newton

Hudson Bay Man



I wrote this in 2008 during and shortly after the Orkney Folk Festival, where Alison and I were guest performers. The song is written in traditional style which comes naturally to me. I have aimed, in the narrative, for a lively distillation of John Rae's key achievements and personal qualities, not least his exemplary leadership, solid integrity and loyalty - loyalty to family, friends, employers, the INUIT people - and not forgetting Orkney itself... My main inspiration was from Ken McGoogan's excellent book *Fatal Passage*.

Geordie McIntyre**HUDSON BAY MAN**

*John Rae he was a Hudson Bay Man,
A son of Orkney, born and bred.
His early years on those windswept islands
Helped prepare him for what lay ahead.*

*He was a doctor and explorer,
A combination that went hand in hand,
Probing forests, lakes and tundra,
In a wild and mighty land.*

*By ski and sledge, snow-shoe, by kayak,
He led his devoted men,
He learned the Inuit skills and cultures,
To them became a loyal friend.*

*John Rae revealed the fate of Franklin,
And where the sailors' bones still rest,
Found the missing link of the Northwest
Passage,
Examples of his determined quests.*

*Full recognition, it was slow in coming,
For Rae was not a Navy man,
But in the annals of the Arctic
Bold John Rae was in the van.*

*Oh yes, he was a Hudson Bay Man,
A son of Orkney, born and bred,
Across a land both wild and mighty,
Others followed where John Rae led.*

This CD is being sold for £5 to raise money for the Hall of Clestrain at JRS events and on our website. As well as Hudson Bay Man, it includes another song about Orkney, White Wings, also written by Geordie McIntyre, and performed by Geordie and Alison.



Visit of HRH The Duke of Gloucester to the Hall of Clestrain

24th October 2017



HRH The Duke of Gloucester visited the Hall of Clestrain on 24th October as part of a two-day visit to Orkney during which he visited places including St Magnus Kirk, Birsay, Stromness Lifeboat Station and Stromness Museum. The Duke originally trained as an architect and took a keen interest in the developments at the Hall. He was shown around the building by Norman Shearer, and asked questions about plans for its future. Although it was a short visit, we are grateful to have had the opportunity to welcome such a high-profile visitor. We received a very warm thank you letter from The Duke's Private Secretary, Lt Col Alastair Todd, which will take pride of place in our archives! We are grateful to Patron of the John Rae Society, Bill Spence, who, as Lord Lieutenant of Orkney, was responsible for arranging The Duke's visit.

Rachel Boak



John Rae, Vilhjálmur Stefansson and the Friendly Arctic

Presentation to University of the
Highlands and Islands Archaeology
Institute Conference

14th -17th September 2017,
Kirkwall, Orkney

The Spotted Sun: John Rae, Vilhjálmur Stefansson and the Friendly Arctic

Astrid E.J. Ogilvie, Níels Einarsson and
Ross A. Virginia

(article based on the above presentation)

John Rae (1813-1893), undoubtedly one of the great explorers of all time, both in terms of his endurance abilities and his achievements, did not receive the honours that he deserved in his lifetime, and is only now beginning to take his rightful place amongst the pioneers in Arctic exploration. However, he had a great admirer in the form of another Arctic explorer, the Icelandic-Canadian-American Vilhjálmur Stefansson (1879-1962).



Vilhjalmur Stefansson on a summer hunt. Canadian Arctic Expedition, 1914. Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library, Stef MS 226

His parents came from northern Iceland, latterly from a farm named "Kroppur" near Akureyri.



The farm of "Kroppur" where Vilhjalmur Stefansson's parents lived before emigrating to Canada - as it is in 2017. Photo: Astrid Ogilvie.

In 1876 they emigrated to Canada and settled in Arnes, Manitoba. Stefansson was born three years later on 3rd November 1879. In 1881 the family moved to North Dakota. Stefansson attended the universities of North Dakota and Iowa and undertook graduate studies in anthropology at Harvard University. He explored Arctic Canada during 1913-1918 and, in total, he spent 12 years in the Arctic. Amongst other things, he is accredited with being the first European to reach the islands now known as Brock, Mackenzie King, Borden, Meighen, and Loughheed in the far north of Canada in the regions of both present-day Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Stefansson also found time to write some 24 books describing his explorations and life in Arctic regions as well as more scholarly works. He is best known for his portrayal of the Arctic, not as an inhospitable wasteland, but as a land, potentially of plenty, for those who chose to learn from the local people how best to use the available resources. One of his books is entitled *The Friendly Arctic*¹ and this title encapsulates both his philosophy and vision regarding the region. This same name has been applied to a travelling exhibition highlighting his explorations. This was developed by the Stefansson Arctic Institute, the Institute in Akureyri,

northern Iceland,



View over Akureyri and Eyjafjörður. Photo: Astrid Ogilvie.



The Stefansson Arctic Institute is housed in this building. Photo: Astrid Ogilvie

that is named for him, and Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, where Stefansson had close connections. After living for many years in New York, he moved to Hanover in 1952. He became Director of Polar studies at Dartmouth and placed his extensive library related to Arctic studies there.

In his perception of the Arctic as a "friendly" place, Stefansson had much in common with John Rae, to whom it was obvious that the way to survive in the Arctic was to learn from the people who lived there. Rae clearly revelled in his wilderness explorations and was delighted when he was commissioned in 1846 to undertake his first expedition to the Canadian Arctic. This journey resulted in the only book written by Rae. In an article published in 1954, Stefansson wrote of this expedition: "So began the Scottish doctor's first Expedition, when he was trying out his theories for the first time,

learning the techniques of the Eskimos, groping towards his own inventions ...²."

The Franklin expedition had set off in search of the Northwest Passage just one year before this journey of Rae's - in 1845. Referring to Rae's book, Stefansson notes that, in the first chapters, having told of a boat voyage northward along the Hudson Bay coast from Churchill, Rae tells of meetings with Inuit peoples, and then of the attainment of Repulse Bay, but with "no intelligence of Sir John Franklin" about whom he had hoped to learn, though the worries concerning the expedition had not yet developed.³"

By 1847, however, it was clear that the Franklin expedition was lost, and, from 1848 onwards, several attempts were made to find survivors. Finally, in 1854, John Rae, while surveying for the Hudson's Bay Company, discovered the true fate of the Franklin party from talking to Inuit hunters of King William Island (Qikiqtaaluk in Inuktitut). Rae was already regarded with some distaste by the British establishment because of his advocacy of using native ways and clothing in order to survive in the Arctic. When the Hudson's Bay Company announced his discovery, in particular that there had been cannibalism at the end, the news was received with horror and disbelief, and Lady Franklin and the novelist Charles Dickens were among those who sought successfully to vilify John Rae. In spite of his discovery, searches continued to be made over the next four decades. Both of Franklin's ships - the *Erebus* and the *Terror* - have recently been found in locations which exonerate the testimonies of both local Inuit and John Rae himself.

In 1913, Vilhjálmur Stefansson gave an address to the Royal Society in London.

His speech did not go down well, in part because of his praise of John Rae: "Dr John Rae had been dead 19 years, but was, it seems, persona non grata with the Admirals who were still the backbone of the dressy and austere social craft of the top brass in the British Navy ...⁴."



Niels Einarsson, Director of the Stefansson Arctic Institute and Astrid Ogilvie in front of the farm site of "Kroppur". Photo Oddny Stella Snorraddottir

These two men, Vilhjalmur Stefansson and John Rae, had much in common: both of them were innovative and skilled Arctic explorers who achieved much in terms of charting new territory; they perceived the Arctic as a "friendly place"; they had the sense to learn from the locals; and they had an inherent lack of prejudice. In short, they were men "ahead of their time" with a disregard for what they felt to be inappropriate conventions. As regards many of his ideas, Stefansson was more than willing to concede that Rae had thought of them first.



Astrid Ogilvie at the Hall of Clestrain. Photo: Vidar Hreinsson.

In summary, these words of Stefansson's provide a most fitting eulogy: "... John Rae, a man exact and truthful and in his methods of travel a generation ahead of his time, for while his countrymen were still using the (in many ways absurd) methods of travel which handicapped them so greatly and led to so much needless suffering and to so many deplorable tragedies, he had put into effect the only sound principle of the traveller - that of doing in Rome as the Romans do, which in the Arctic means using methods of travel which the forces of evolution have taught to the dwellers of icy lands ...⁵."

Dr Astrid E.J. Ogilvie, Senior Scientist, Stefansson Arctic Institute, Iceland

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1. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 1921. *The Friendly Arctic (The Story of Five Years in Polar Regions)*, Macmillan and Co., New York.
2. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 1954. *A Scot Goes Native*, Unpublished manuscript, Dartmouth College Collection, p. 5.
3. *Ibid*, p. 5.
4. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 1964. *Discovery, The Autobiography of Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, Toronto, London, p. 148.
5. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 1913. *My Life With The Eskimo*, Macmillan and Co., New York, p. 305.

The Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge

The Scott Polar Research Institute was founded in 1920 as a memorial to Captain Scott and his fellow expeditioners. It is part of the Cambridge University Department of Geography and home to a number of academic staff as well as several dozen postgraduate students. The building contains a world class polar research library, an extensive repository of original polar documents and equipment, and a small museum.

The permanent exhibition space at the museum is divided into areas looking at the indigenous peoples of the Arctic, the search for the Northwest Passage (including several paragraphs on John Rae and the Franklin search), the heroic era of Antarctic exploration, and polar science and politics. A separate space is dedicated to temporary exhibitions and has recently highlighted the International Geophysical Year and "Operation Deep Freeze". Currently it is focussing on research visits to Greenland.

As a SPRI volunteer I man the front desk, deal with shop sales, and attempt to answer visitors' questions. I have a number of favourite objects in the museum which include a barrel organ taken by Parry on several Arctic voyages in the 1820s, and a pair of crudely-carved small wooden figures from Vaygach Island in the Russian Arctic. These types of figures were regularly taken to the island by Nenets hunters and positioned on the shore to face the rising sun. Tradition apparently required that their mouths be smeared with blood from a freshly-killed reindeer. At times there were hundreds of these figures lined up on

the island, though missionaries would hold occasional bonfires to reduce numbers.

The SPRI archives hold numerous documents from John Rae including an 800 page handwritten autobiography covering 1813 to 1854 (unpublished).

The archives are searchable via the SPRI website :

www.spri.cam.ac.uk/archives

or via the Archives Portal Europe

www.archivesportaleurope.net/directory/-/dir/content/GB-15/fa

where material relating to John Rae (and other members of the Rae family) is listed alphabetically.

Martin Atherton



John Rae, the National Maritime Museum, the British Library and my Orkney holiday

In May 2017, I spent my second holiday in Orkney, staying near the Hall of Clestrain, having first visited the islands over 35 years ago. The week's holiday was a magical experience for both my wife Alice and me, with so many memorable highlights. The visit was further enhanced by my visit to the open weekend to visit John Rae's house. I have since become a member of the John Rae Society and I am increasingly interested in Franklin, John Rae and the development of 19th-century Canada.

I had heard of Rae vaguely before visiting Orkney, but I managed to visit his memorial at St Magnus Cathedral and learnt more

about him at Stromness Museum. A few weeks ago I saw the excellent exhibition, *Death in the Ice*, at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. There are many artefacts worth exploring here. The Canadian Museum of History publication, *Death in the Ice*, is a well-produced publication on the rigours of Franklin's expedition, mentioning Rae's interest in the Inuit culture and his report to the Admiralty, which included the reference to cannibalism, in July 1854.

In July there was a presentation at the British Library by Phil Hatfield, Curator at the Eccles Centre of the British Library, entitled 'Imagining Canada's North', where he showed the development of Canada and its Northern Territories in maps, landscape art and photography over 150 years. The role of John Rae in this story was outlined and he mentioned that Franklin's widow, Lady Jane Franklin, is one of the most remarkable and important female figures of the 19th century and is hardly known about. The Victorians were completely engrossed by the narrative of Arctic exploration and derring-do. Mr Hatfield told me that many of the archives of the Hudson Bay Company are held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, some of which are in the University there. By coincidence, my Canadian uncle, Professor Donald Hall, was a Professor of Geophysics there for over 30 years.

The Canadian Government are increasingly interested in Arctic studies, seeing it as a possible growth area in trade, tourism and geopolitics. Climate change is likely to make the Arctic oceans more navigable.

I would like to wish the John Rae Society best of luck with your project to restore the Hall of Clestrain, and I hope to be back

in Orkney in autumn 2018 to see how you are all getting on.

Michael Crabbe



The Two Johns – A Personal Perspective

I initially joined the John Rae Society, for two reasons, the first reason being – I dislike injustice. The injustice of John Rae's achievements being 'squashed' – largely because he told the truth, irked me. I am a Socialist, from a peasant family: not the cap-doffing kind of peasant, but the 'burn their house down if they don't treat us right' kind of peasant. I'm not saying that's the right approach to have! But I was brought up with a strong sense of the importance of fairness, and of standing up for yourself and what you believe to be right behaviour. So, the injustice of Mrs Franklin squashing John Rae's achievements, and her side-kicks helping to promote her husband's achievement, at the expense of John Rae's reputation, very much went against the grain with me. The reader may be wondering why I say 'Mrs Franklin', but, as I said, I'm a Socialist, and I don't go in for all that 'Lord and Lady' business. We are just people. And what a muddled old lot we are. We get confused, fearful, panic a bit and do regrettable things.

The second reason for joining was the Hall of Clestrain. It's just such a great little building. It's a grand building, on a small scale. I love symmetry, and it's all about symmetry – everything balances. I hoped to see the deterioration of the Hall being halted. I don't know if I'll live long enough

to see it fully restored, but, with time and patience, the work will get done, whether I'm there to see it or not.

*But, the tide is turning
And John Rae is
Finding his place.*

So, that's why I joined, initially. My ire about the 'nobs' re-writing what happened increased when I learnt that John Rae's expedition had survived largely because they listened to and learnt from the Inuit people. They weren't too proud to do so and so they survived. Franklin and his team, as far as the story goes, were too proud to learn from 'natives', and so they perished. It's tempting to go off on one about how, to me, that reflects the situation with the British Empire at the time – it was all about domination and suppression of those seen as being 'lower' than the 'nobs' – but that would be heading off down a slightly different road.

At this point in my understanding of the story I wrote this...

Thoughts prompted by the John Rae Stone
- Hall of Clestrain

*John Rae
Was disregarded
For many years,
Nay, decades.
And why?
Because he wasn't a 'nob'.
He wasn't a 'Sir'.
It's the nobs who tend to write history.*

*"It's the same
The whole world over.
It's the poor
What gets the blame.
It's the rich
What gets the pleasure
Ain't it all
A bleedin' shame?"*

Putting right the wrongs had begun. There has been a statue of John Rae in St Magnus Cathedral for years, but I'm not sure many people pay much attention to it, unless they know it's there, and are looking for it. In recent years, a plaque has been placed in Westminster Abbey, honouring John Rae. There is now a statue in Stromness, nice and prominent, right by the harbour. A smart 'standing stone' was erected by the Hall of Clestrain, with a plaque on it – made by local stone-masons.

And then – a really big step – last September, when the owners of the Hall of Clestrain, Ivan and Jean Craigie, sold the Hall to the John Rae Society, there was a ceremony to mark this. I attended the ceremony for the 'handing over of the keys', and folk got the chance to actually go into the Hall itself.



Handing over the Hall of Clestrain



Standing outside the Hall, a very striking feature is the position – the view. The people living there could have watched the ships coming in, and going out – often probably carrying folk they knew and that they wondered if they would see again. It's stunning, just stunning, with, as always in the West Mainland, the Hoy Hills overlooking it all.

The Hall looks good outside, with pleasing symmetry, even down to the balance of the outbuildings which used to be at the back. Only one remains, but it's a neat little building – just right for a visitor centre?!



Inside – though the lower room-space still has the concrete pig-pens from when it was used for keeping animals – you can imagine how the Hall was. This lower level would have been the kitchens and other utility rooms, and the steps then take you up to the 'living quarters'. These steps are of interest, in themselves: solid stone, free-standing, just coming out from the wall, in a pleasing sweep, with the sweep of the upper stair-way, balancing it, overhead.



I know I have a strong imagination, but I don't think it's too much of a stretch for anyone to picture this building in the height of its Georgian/Regency/Victorian grandeur. There are paintings of it - how it might have been - one of which is I think is in the possession of the John Rae Society. These can all be displayed once the visitor centre is in place.

And now I move on to the story of 'The Two Johns', and how my mind was sent onto a different track, on Sunday 23rd July this year, when I went to an open afternoon at the Hall.

As President, Andrew Appleby, was talking to someone, I heard him say that the Franklin family and the Rae family had been firm friends, until John Rae came back with The News. Andrew was also saying that he hopes that the Hall of Clestrain will become "a place of healing and reconciliation" regarding the story of the two expeditions. This made me think, and think hard. I had seen Mrs Franklin as the villain of the piece, but her husband went off on an expedition, and didn't come back. His good friend then went to look for him. The friend came back, not only with news that Franklin's expedition had failed, but that there were reports of them resorting to cannibalism to try to survive. For a lady at that time, that must have been unimaginably hard to take on board. I have been known to say that whether I would be prepared to eat someone if I had to would depend a lot on whether they were someone I liked or not. I can be flippant about it now, but, back then? I'm not excusing what she did, not at all, but Andrew's words made me think again about the whole situation.

I'm reluctant to go into the story in too

much detail, as, to be honest, I don't know enough about it – as evidenced by my not knowing that the two families were friends – but I do think that this opens up a whole different aspect of the tale. I now see Mrs Franklin as a strong-willed, but mistaken, woman who felt she had to do something. Anger, fear and panic led her along a path which could have been easily avoided. I don't know if she ever realised just how mistaken she was, but, if she did, it was probably too late, as the snowball would have started rolling, and they don't stop, they just get bigger and bigger. Maybe what the John Rae Society is doing will help to melt the snowball.

And imagine how it would feel for John Franklin to realise he'd led his people to a dead-end – and a grim dead-end at that? John Rae returned from his expedition, but we all know what happened then. It's a lot harder to take bad treatment from someone you were close to, than it is to take bad treatment from someone you don't care tuppence about.

There was a lot of hurt there, all round, and to make the Hall of Clestrain a place for healing that hurt and easing the pain produced by that situation, is a worthwhile cause. It's not just seeing justice done for John Rae, it's seeing people resolving their differences and getting together again.

And so, I'm ending this piece on a note of hope. I haven't given a great deal of information about the whole story – that's available in other places, including a book by John Rae's Canadian great-great-grand-niece, Alice Jane Hamilton, *Finding John Rae*. I mainly wanted to get across the idea of adopting a different approach to what happened, maybe with a bit more understanding of how people are and how

people can be. I started off very much agin' Mrs Franklin and Co, and now, because of an overheard piece of conversation, I had a big re-think. Learning lessons, always learning lessons, or I hope I do!

I hope that the Franklins and the Raes can make peace. If all aspects of the story (I'm purposely not using the word 'sides') are presented, and the whole story is told at the Hall, then a better idea of the characters concerned may be reached.

I think it's a wonderful benediction on the house, to see its future as being a place of healing and reconciliation for the whole story of John Rae's achievements – and of Franklin's too. Maybe, with a shift in perspective and a bit of understanding, the 'history' of the Franklin expedition and Rae's expeditions can be brought more into balance and some greater clarity can be reached – it can become 'The Tale of the Two Johns'!



Spiral in one of the stone steps at the Hall

And, because I can't resist spirals, I'm ending with a pleasing motif carved into the base of the former balustrade flanking the steps up to the front door of the Hall... what goes around, comes around!

As a postscript, when I visited the Hall again in September, I penned this response;

Time and Patience

*Standing in the kitchen,
Hall of Clestrain,
Looking up. Good
Hole in floor of room above.
Cobweb, gilded by the sun,
Fills hole.*

*Robert the Bruce.
Time and Patience.
The Hall will be restored.*

Bernie Bell

You can read Bernie's report on John Rae's birthday weekend for The Orkney News at <https://theorkneynews.scot/2017/10/10/celebrating-dr-john-raes-birthday/>



Short Passages

TESCO

Bags of Help

Following voting by customers in the Kirkwall store over the summer, we are thrilled to announce that the John Rae Society's Hall of Clestrain project has been awarded a grant of £1,000 by the Tesco Bags of Help Scheme. We plan to use this for a community event taking place in 2018 – watch this space for further details.

Tesco teamed up with Groundwork to launch its community funding scheme, which sees grants of £4,000, £2,000 and £1,000 – all raised from the 5p bag levy – being awarded to local community projects. Greenspace Scotland is working with Groundwork to support Scottish communities.



John Rae Society AGM and membership update

The John Rae Society AGM took place on Sunday 12th November. You can read the President's 2017 report and a summary of the minutes on the JRS website:

<http://www.johnraesociety.com/images/PDF/Minutes/Presidents-Report-2017.pdf> and

<http://www.johnraesociety.com/images/PDF/Minutes/Summary-of-JRS-AGM-minutes-12-Nov-2017.pdf>

Summaries of the minutes of all JRS Board meetings are available on the website.

Two new Trustees were elected – Rachel Boak and Neil Kermode – while three existing Trustees agreed to serve a further term: Jim Chalmers, Helen Cowing and Xandra Shearer. Fiona Lettice was also voted in as a Trustee at this meeting, having taken over from Colin Bullen earlier in the year.

We are pleased to announce that Magnus Linklater has agreed to become a Patron of the Society. He said, "I am delighted and honoured to become a Patron of the John Rae Society, paying tribute to a great man, a great Orcadian, and a pioneer of Arctic exploration." Mr Linklater is the son of Orkney novelist, Eric Linklater, and has built a hugely successful career as a journalist, having held a number of senior editorships at newspapers in London and Scotland, including The Evening Standard, The Sunday Times and The Scotsman.

Type of Membership	Number
Annual	42
Standing order	79
Life	147
Total	268
Members by Area	
Orkney	84
Scotland	77
UK Other	73
Overseas	34



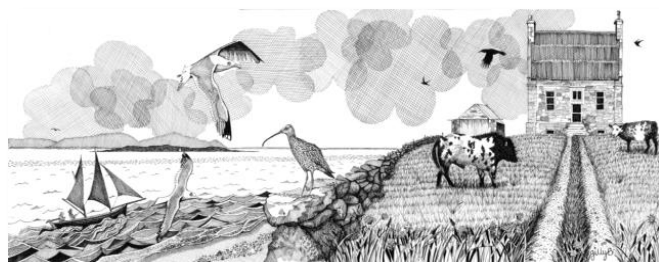
Temporary visitor centre

Our current project is the creation of a temporary visitor centre at the Hall of Clestrain. Neil Kermode has applied to the National Lottery 'Awards for All' for a grant for this purpose. We are in discussions with a local builder about purchasing and adapting a Portakabin. We hope it will be sited on the footprint of the demolished Pavilion at the back of the Hall. The Cuminga Trust has pledged £1,000 to fit it out for educational purposes. This would enable us to hold open days more often, to give visitors a more comfortable space in which to learn about the history of the Hall and the proposed project, and a place where we could offer refreshments and JRS merchandise more easily than the temporary set-up we have used for open days in 2017.



Gillian Bridle, Artist & Illustrator

We were excited to be approached by artist and illustrator, Gillian Bridle, earlier in the year about the possibility of her designing merchandise for the John Rae Society inspired by the Hall of Clestrain which could be sold to raise money for the restoration project.



Gilly writes: "I am an illustrator and design artist. I like to sketch from the life lived around me, of people, the creatures, and the business they go about. These sketches turn into designs, pen and ink, paper cut, colourful collage or acrylic paintings which are then printed onto fabric for soft furnishings, made into cards, prints and stationery.

"I work from a little studio in the old capital of Shetland, which has much to inspire me, with its people, sea, boat, and bird activity. After training as a textile designer, I have worked in many mediums, but now I find myself being drawn back to designing for fabric. The rest of my time is spent with my husband and terriers. We live on a sailing boat that bobs around quite a lot in the windy north, and sometimes goes off on adventures.

"So, a few words about how the hall has inspired me... I am an avid reader of historic adventurers, particularly those of the Arctic and Antarctic. I had heard of John Rae, but didn't really know his story until I read Fatal Passage by Ken McGoogan. Two

years ago I visited Orkney for the first time and sought out the Hall of Clestrain. It's a building of great presence, in its scale and location. Crows were circling overhead, the autumn light was failing and squalls of rain were passing over Hoy. It appealed to my gothic sensibilities. I thought I was looking at a building with no more future than to become an enigmatic ruin.



"Two years later, I am now living in Shetland and returned to Orkney to make some sketches of the Hall. I discovered the John Rae Society, with big plans to restore and make the Hall a vibrant part of Orkney life. I am not in a position to donate cash, but I thought I could offer my designs to be used to create fundraising products. I hope it will be the start of a personal project for me too, to illustrate the renovation work as it progresses."

We look forward to developing designs and products with Gilly over the coming months and years. You can learn more about her work here:

<https://gilly-b.com/>



Forthcoming John Rae Society Events

We are starting to plan our events for 2018. We hope to show *Passage* in different locations around Orkney in the New Year, including Stromness, St Margaret's Hope and Hoy. We are intending to run the John Rae Festival again in early May, in addition to regular open days at the Hall of Clestrain through the summer months. We will also hold the traditional graveside ceremony on John Rae's birthday in September with other events around this date.

We always welcome volunteers to help with events. We need help with serving refreshments, selling raffle and lottery tickets, and being a friendly face, happy to chat to visitors. If you are interested in helping, please contact

secretary@johnraesociety.com

We hope to produce the next *Aglooka Advisor* in spring 2018.

If anyone has anything they'd like to contribute, please contact secretary@johnraesociety.com

