

Aglooka Advisor

Winter 2019

Issue No. 9



Aglooka Advisor
Winter 2019 Issue No.9

President's Report	page 4
From the Orcadian Archives 24th July 1869	page 6
Charles Dickens and John Rae: article by Eric Summers	page 7
Corporate member: Birsay Energy	page 11
A Feast of Forage at the Orkney Science Festival: article by Sigrid Appleby	page 12
Why do people join the John Rae Society?	page 14
Corporate member: Stockans Oatcakes	page 15
Memories of Gjoa Haven: by Pat Garwasiuk	page 16
Hall of Clestrain: archival training report article by Dr Sarah-Jane Gibbon	page 17
John Rae September weekend	page 20
Volunteers needed	page 21
Co-op cheque for the John Rae Society	page 22
Corporate member: Skara Books	page 22
John Rae Birthday Draw	page 23
Corporate member: Kristin Linklater Voice Centre	page 24
Corporate member: Adventure Canada	page 25
Corporate member: RICS	page 26
Membership update	page 27
Forthcoming events	page 27

Photo on front cover by James Grieve

Patrons

Dr Peter St John, The Earl of Orkney

Ken McGoogan, Author

Ray Mears, Author & TV Presenter

Bill Spence, Lord Lieutenant of Orkney

Sir Michael Palin

Magnus Linklater OBE

Board of Trustees

(in alphabetical order by surname)

Andrew Appleby — Jim Chalmers — Anna Elmy — Neil Kermod — Fiona Lettice—
Mark Newton — Norman Shearer

Committee

President — Andrew Appleby

Chairman — Norman Shearer

Honorary Secretary — Anna Elmy

Honorary Treasurer — Fiona Lettice

Webmaster and Social Media — Mark Newton

Membership Secretary — Fiona Gould

Registered Office

The John Rae Society

7 Church Road, Stromness, Orkney KW16 3BA

Tel: 01856 851414

e-mail: info@johnraesociety.com

Newsletter Editor — Fiona Gould

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

President's Report

I am delighted that we had several very successful open days. These were kindly held in Ivan and Jean's garage: our stalwart visitors welcomed refreshments during oft-Arctic conditions. A goodly proportion of these joined the society.

It was our distinct aim to raise the remaining sum of around £12,000 to complete payment for The Hall of Clestrain. With raffles, the John Rae Birthday Lottery and kind donations this sum was almost reached.

A very generous Texan gentleman, Bill Miller, secured the purchase at the last minute with a donation of £9,500. This gave us over and above our needs. The final sum was presented to Ivan and Jean Cragie at the draw of the Lottery, thus securing the property to JRS.

The approaching winter storms threatened. Paddy Casey, of Casey Construction, agreed to step in and secure the roof, stop the constant leaks and cover the windows with clear

Perspex. This repulsed the pervading pigeons, and the Casey Gang cleared the final ordure produced by these perching avians.

The Hall is now drying out and considered saved. Had the roof blown away in the winter storms, which was most likely, we would have lost the floors and much valuable detail. I consider the works to have been completed just in time!

The Co-Op shops in Orkney adopted The John Rae Society as one of their worthy causes for this year. (See separate report later in this newsletter.)

March saw the commencement of the Arctic Return expedition. This was an amazing feat of endurance by the four explorers. Sadly, two had to withdraw from the expedition some way through. We are so grateful to Garry Tutte and Frank Wolfe, who didn't make it, for their bravery. David Reid, leader and Richard Smith completed the expedition that followed the route that John Rae took when he learned the fate of the Franklin Expedition and also discovered the final

link in the North West Passage. Please go to www.arcticreturn.com for the full update.

Corporate Membership.

Minimum £500 fee, then £100.00 per year. This has now been taken up firstly by Adventure Canada, then RICS, Birsay Energy Trust, Kristin Linklater Voice Centre, Skarabooks and Stockan's Oatcakes. We are actively seeking further corporate members.

The Cuminga Trust has generously supported our archaeological activities. They are very impressed with the high standard of the interesting work we carried out. They have promised to continue funding us. The latest was an archive day, where we discovered the completion details of The Hall of Clestrain on 13th September 1769. This being so, we began planning a celebration to mark the occasion.

In May we purchased a portacabin to use as a temporary Visitor Centre. Casey Construction realized the inadequacy of it and lent us a far superior cabin for as long as we need it. This has worked

so well for us. On open days we can supply teas and cakes and have retail space. We are immensely grateful to Ivan and Jean for the use of their garage in our earlier stages.

Dr. Barbara Rae R.A. gave us an Inuit model kayak, which actually formed part of John Rae's personal collection. This is displayed in our showcase of other Inuit artefacts.

JRS is delighted to announce that we have engaged a Project Manager. Sandra Deans has been appointed to this post. She has been fully engaged in researching and applying for grant aid to make our projects entirely successful.

Visitor figures have increased time on time on our open days, proving the popularity and support that JRS has for its ambitions. All of these visitors applaud our aims to create The John Rae International Arctic Centre, which could become The Gateway to The Arctic.

The Orkney Science Festival promoted a John Rae Weekend. A tremendous foraged dinner produced by internationally renowned chefs made an admirable repast at

The Orphir Community Centre. Sam Britten of Orkney Craft Vinegar led the policy of natural foods. Reflecting what was available in Orkney's Neolithic and in John Rae's time, an amazing and memorable evening was the grand result. JRS had a very profitable raffle and Highland Park served special whisky at the event. The following afternoon a programme of Arctic and Foraging talks were presented. Maria Pia Casarini spoke of Sir John Franklin's sad exploits. In the interval she cut The Hall of Clestrain's 250th birthday cake. Baked by Harry Stores, this was a most welcome occasion.

Jane Hamilton has given us a special Inuit-made covered bowl from shiny black mudstone. Being fragile, it is damaged. We intend having it professionally restored for our permanent collection.

A sincere thank you to our amazing volunteers for their tremendous help. I would like to mention the young Duncan McNeish whose youthful skills make our laptop till work so efficiently.

Finally, I wish to record that we lost Ian McIntyre. He was

taken with cardiac arrest late in September. At his memorial service £1,475 was raised for the John Rae Society. This was sad and sudden news. If anyone would like to add to that sum in his memory, then please do. Our thoughts are with Anne.

Andrew Appleby. President
John Rae Society

**From *The Orcadian*
Archives
Saturday, July 24, 1869**

**ANOTHER ORKNEY PRIZE
WINNER AT WIMBLEDON —**

We are glad to be able to announce that Dr Rae has carried off two valuable prizes at Wimbledon, namely £25 for the greater number of cartoons (67) at 200 yards with the Enfield rifle: also the 1st Anglo-Belgian prize at £25 with a score of 35 points at 200 and 500 yards, five shots at each range.

*Last year Eric Summers, a JRS member and editor of **Little Doric**, the newsletter of the Aberdeen branch of the Dickens Fellowship, asked us for an article about the John Rae Society, which we supplied. He has reciprocated with the following article about Dickens and John Rae. (Editor)*

Charles Dickens & John Rae

Perhaps it is a little bold for a member of the Dickens Fellowship to submit an article for the John Rae's Society's journal. For many Charles Dickens is something of a villain in the John Rae story. As a great admirer of both men, however, I do believe that the dispute between them has been exaggerated and should not be allowed to distort the picture we have of both.

Charles Dickens is a writer closely associated with London, but in fact he had strong Scottish connections. His wife was Scottish, his first newspaper employer was Scottish, his first major reporting assignment was to Edinburgh, he was a great admirer of Sir Walter Scott, he knew his Burns and quoted him in his novels and he was fond of whisky calling one particularly fine bottle 'Mary Morrison', another Burns allusion.

Dickens led a singularly energetic life having a huge range of interests, deter-

minedly filling every unforgiving minute. Along with much of Victorian Britain he was fascinated by the polar regions and with his close friend Wilkie Collins wrote, produced and acted in a highly successful Arctic drama called *The Frozen Deep*. It was while this play was being performed in Manchester that he first encountered and fell passionately in love with Ellen Ternan, a young actress more than twenty years his junior. This was in 1857 and it led eventually to the break-up of his marriage in 1858. Arctic exploration had many casualties.

A few years earlier Dickens's interest in the poles had taken the form of a meeting with another attractive and still relatively young lady. It was in November 1854 that he was invited to the home of Lady Franklin. She was distressed by John Rae's recently published report on the disappearance of her husband, Sir John, on his expedition to find the North-West Passage. Rae had visited her but had been rebuffed. She main-

tained that he should never have written that everyone was dead and that there had been a resort to cannibalism and she would not listen to his defence that he had only recorded what he had been told and that his report had been for the Admiralty. It had not been his choice to have it in the public domain.

She could not be appeased and was now recruiting the most famous novelist in the world, who was also editing a weekly journal *Household Words*, to mount a defence of her husband's honour.

Dickens was intrigued and had his secretary order up newspaper cuttings on the story. He was persuaded that Rae had got it wrong and decided to pick up his formidable pen in support of Lady Franklin's case. Many John Rae supporters have been appalled by the destruction of Rae's reputation that followed and have found it difficult to forgive Dickens.

But is this fair? To assess what Dickens really did, it is

important to go back to the original articles that appeared in *Household Words*.

On Saturday December 3rd 1854 Dickens wrote about '*The Lost Arctic Voyages*' in an article which he continued a week later. Reading it one is shocked by the violently racist language directed at the 'esquimaux' and the naivety in believing that 'Englishmen' were incapable of the sordid behaviour ascribed to them by Rae. Sadly Dickens's racial attitudes would have been shared by the majority of the British public at the time - we are all prisoners of the times in which we live - but ironically *naivety* is his main charge against Rae who, Dickens wrote, should not have believed what he was told by 'savages'.

But note that Dickens does not criticise Rae for reporting what he had been told or for hurrying home with his news. Indeed he says Rae was right to do so. It was the Admiralty, he argues, that was wrong to release Rae's report.

Important too is the fact that Dickens gave Rae a right of reply, which he did in a powerful article published on 23rd December. At the start Rae comes across as rather intimidated by Dickens's reputation as a writer:

I am aware of the difficulties I have to encounter in replying to the article on the 'Lost Arctic Voyagers.' That the author of that article is a writer of very great ability and practice, and that he makes the best use of both to prove his opinions, is very evident...To oppose this, I have nothing but a small amount of practical knowledge of the question at issue, with a few facts to support my views and opinions; but, I can only throw them together in a very imperfect and unconnected form, as I have little experience in writing...

As is evident, Rae need not have been so modest. He writes very well and to his credit takes not one backward step from what he believed to have happened to the Franklin expedition:

That my opinions remain exactly the same as they were when my report to the Admiralty was written, may be inferred from all I have now stated. That twenty or twenty-five Esquimaux could, for two months together, continue to repeat the same story without variation in any material point, and adhere firmly to it, in spite of all sorts of cross-questioning, is to me the clearest proof that the information they gave me was founded on fact. That the 'white men' were not murdered by the natives, but that they died of starvation, is, to my mind, equally beyond a doubt.

Writing from Stromness, and certainly an angry man, Rae also had his say about Franklin's sailors who, Dickens had claimed, knew how to behave like gentlemen:

Much stress is laid on the moral character and the admirable discipline of the crews of Sir John Franklin's ships. What their state of discipline may have been I cannot say, but their conduct

at the very last British port they entered (Stromness) was not such as to make those who knew it consider them very deserving of the high eulogium passed upon them in Household Words.

At the end of his piece, however, Rae is generous in thanking Dickens for letting him defend himself in Dickens's own journal:

In conclusion, let me remark, that I fully appreciate the kind, courteous, and flattering manner in which my name is mentioned by the writer on the subject of the lost Arctic Voyagers.

Dickens of course was unpersuaded that he had got it wrong, and in that regard Rae was just one of many who failed to change the great author's mind on a range of issues.

So, the two were in dispute but had rather more mutual respect on display than is generally acknowledged. And did Dickens's intervention really change anything?

At the end of 1854, in spite of protests from Lady Franklin, the Admiralty called off the search for Franklin. The Crimean War was now a big distraction. What is also forgotten is that Rae did receive his reward money, of which he gave £2000.00 to his men. This was in June 1856. That was only two years after his report. Was that an excessively long time to wait? Surely it was prudent not to hand over immediately a large sum of money without checking on the veracity of the claim.

What Rae did not get was proper recognition - a knighthood and a statue - and that may have been less to do with Dickens and more to do with Rae himself being seen as not behaving as an *English* gentleman should. Unlike Franklin, he had gone native in the Arctic, and had left his piano at home!

It is unfortunate that Charles Dickens and John Rae, to the best of our knowledge, never met. They shared a love of literature, an obsession with

the Arctic regions and tremendous physical energy. They might well have got on rather well. But if the fact is that they remained distant from each other, then perhaps in 2019, as the 150th anniversary of Dickens's death approaches (2020), as John Rae's achievements are increasingly recognised by a wider public, and as we have the tantalising prospect of their respective homes — Gad's Hill in Kent and Clestrain Hall in Orkney — being one day opened to visitors, perhaps we should set aside the regrettable dispute that arose between them and focus on the astonishing achievements of these two towering figures of the nineteenth century.

Eric Summers

Secretary, Aberdeen Branch
of the Dickens Fellowship

Corporate Member: Birsay Energy

We have a deep respect and admiration for John Rae because of his stamina and endurance enabling him to



cover huge distances in Arctic conditions, coupled with his ability to live off the land which made him an infinitely better and more successful explorer than his forbears. We think to restore the Hall of Clestrain and combine it with an exhibition of John Rae's life will be an unusual and unique tourist attraction which will draw in visitors from all over the world, especially Canada. This is the type of tourism Orkney needs. This is why we took up Corporate membership.

Birsay Energy is an all Orcadian owned company set up in 2009 to take advantage of one of Orkney's biggest assets, wind, to generate electricity using a wind energy converter.

We want to support Orkney enterprise, which is what we have done in this instance.

David Wallace

A Feast of Forage : at the Orkney Science Festival

One of the threads weaving through this year's Orkney International Science Festival was the theme of Foraging.

The Neolithic Feast held in Orphir Community Hall on 6th September was organized and presented to us by Andrew Appleby, President of the JRS and Chef Sam Britten, with, as the programme stated 'a menu of Orkney Fare that's been foraged, fished, hunted and grown'.

There was seating for over 100 people and the hall was full of expectant ticket holders who arrived in good time. The tables were laid out with Andrew's specially-made wood-fired pottery. There were 5 items for each person, so it was a great amount of pottery that after the firing had been treated with beeswax and given a polish. They looked and felt just right. The tables were covered with butter muslin and decorated with wild flowers. Cutlery made from wood, though modern looking, also felt right.

Chef Sam certainly knows how to make the most of available ingredients and produced the

following: **Starter:** Orkney scallops with lentil miso, radish, turnip, elderberry, capers and pepper dulce.

Main course: Shin of Beef or was it auroch? With neap, onion, barley, bone marrow and garlic. The vegetables were from Wheems Organic Farm, South Ronaldsay and the meat from Craigie's Butcher.



Photo by Dr Maria Pia Casarini

Pudding: caramelized Orkney cream with Meadowsweet vinegar (produced by the Orkney Craft Vinegar Company, which is now Sam's successful business) decorated with toasted oats sprinkled on top.

There was also plenty of Sourdough bread, served in brown paper bags, made by Eviedale Bakery and the chef's handmade butter. This brought back memories of

Auntie Bridie's home-churned butter. Strong, salty, proper butter!

All helped along the way by Sam's Honey Mead made with Orkney honey and 'chasers' of Highland Park's new Valfather whisky. Jugs of cold water flavoured with mint and cucumber accompanied the meal.

Several of the fellow diners gathered some of the marrowbones and intended to make something with them. Maybe the ancients did similar things? A bone from a feast, taken home and placed as a memory to give good luck.

Between courses various folk who were giving talks during the Science Festival spoke to us of Foraging and Making, using the Old Ways to survive; of Neolithic feasts previously attended (in present time and of how, even in Mesolithic times, humans might sometimes have over-used the resources available to them and of the natural lactose of mammals. Think about it — mammals start living off milk, then they are weaned, and yet humans continue to drink milk and wonder why they get so

Sam Britten giving a talk between courses



Photo by JohnPeterWelburn ABIPP

much indigestion. Do we actually develop a natural lactose intolerance which we then ignore? Steve Webster was presenting these ideas.

A Feast would not be complete without music and the whole event was accompanied by Kate Fletcher, Corwen Broch and David Griffith, all dressed in home-spun textiles and home-sewn soft leather, playing on a variety of instruments made from all sorts!



Photo by Dr Maria Pia Casarini

Cows' horn, cows' head,
jawbone, a huge shell, scallop
shells (turn them round and
rub the corrugated sides
together and you get the
sound of castanets.

And finally, not forgetting the
John Rae Society's involve-
ment in putting this event
together, to round off the
evening, Hugh Halcro-
Johnston proposed a toast, in
Highland Park whisky, in
Highland Park glasses, to the
250th anniversary of the
building of the Hall of
Clestrain, which was originally
built for the Honeyman family.
This was very fitting, as Mr
Halcro-Johnston is a descend-
ant of the Honeyman family.

Attending such an event as
this can encourage people to
learn about, then get out and
about collecting the wild
goodies which abound, then
use those ingredients
imaginatively to produce
healthy, fresh, interesting and
economical meals. It can also
take us back in time to when
that kind of foraging will have
been a vital addition to other
foodstuff available. They also
used herbs and salt to
preserve food for winter and
leaner times. In his *Skara*
books Andrew describes with
relish the feasting of the

ancient folk, and a feast such
as this one in Orphir can help
to give a person of today a
taste of those past times.

Sigrid Appleby: an edited
and embellished version of an
account in *Orkney News* by
Bernie Bell.

Why do people join the John Rae Society?

*Sometimes when people take out
membership 'out of the blue' I ask
them why they decided to join. Two
recent members kindly replied and
have given me permission to quote
them. Here is an extract from **Neil
Ferguson's** response.(Editor)*

My interest in John Rae was
kindled a number of years ago
by reading George Mackay
Brown's collections of his
weekly pieces in "The
Orcadian" and by visiting the
Stromness museum when in
Orkney on holiday. A visit to
the book shop in the Skara
Brae visitor centre led to the
discovery of "Fatal Passage"
and I suppose it all
mushroomed from there. Rae
is still my main interest in
terms of Arctic exploration
and that led to an interest in
the Franklin expedition of
1845 and the ramifications of
that. It has also led to an

interest in Arctic exploration in general and in the search for the Northwest Passage in particular.

My imagination was kindled by reading of Ken McGoogan's journey from Gjoa Haven to the site on Boothia Peninsula where John Rae first saw that the strait remained free of ice for part of the year and that King William Island was an island and not part of Boothia Peninsula. (*As a result Neil booked a place on a Hurtigruten cruise this August so as to be able to stand on the same place Rae did when he identified the last 'missing piece' of the puzzle of the North-West passage.*)

Nick Collis Bird wrote:

You ask what prompted me to join the JRS? I've always been interested in Polar exploration. In fact Edward Adrian Wilson was a relative of mine, and was with Scott's expedition where he died in 1912.

Franklin was a hero to me until I read *Fatal Passage* by Ken McCoogan. I'd never even heard of John Rae. I thought 'There really ought to be a society to promote this amazing man' and lo and

behold I came across you. Of course I just had to join!

Membership Secretary

**Corporate Member:
Stockan's Oatcakes Ltd**



John Rae was a renowned Orcadian who accomplished great things in the mapping of the northern territories of Canada. By integrating with the native people and copying their methods he made remarkable journeys in a hugely inhospitable climate.

Stockan's Oatcakes are packed full of nutritious wholegrain oats, linked to numerous health benefits. As a high-fibre, low GI grain, oats work to slow digestion and keep you feeling fuller for longer.

It wouldn't be at all surprising if John Rae's prodigious feats were fuelled by a diet high in oats (if not oatcakes.....).

Stewart Crichton

Memories of Gjoa Haven

With keen interest I followed the blogs from Arctic Return to Gjoa Haven and must congratulate the team members who completed the route John Rae took, especially David and Richard who really had to battle the elements. I was sorry that Frank and Garry could not complete the trip. I was pleased that when they arrived in Edmonton on the way home, someone had put up a sign saying 'Arctic Return was here!'

Ghoa Haven has a special meaning to me. When my daughter was in grade 9 (about 16 yrs old) her school arranged for a few pupils to go on an Arctic exchange into Ghoa Haven . One of the Inuit girls stayed with us and all of the other pupils stayed at other places in Edmonton. We took them horseback riding and to the mountains where there are lots of trees! On their return to Ghoa Haven our children stayed with Inuit families. They were taken out

on the land, sitting in qamutiks being pulled by snowmobiles, which was pretty cold as they were there at the beginning of May. They slept in tents and were eating arctic char (which they fished for) and caribou. They were



offered seal, but declined! There are really good carvers in Ghoa Haven and everyone came back with some.

That was a rather long time ago, as my daughter is now 54 years old!

Pat Garwasiuk

The following article, by Dr Sarah Jane Gibbon was accompanied by a list of the information found on the Archive Day incorporated into a timeline for the Hall of Clestrain, as well as a detailed report of work carried out by the Orkney Research centre for Archaeology (ORCA)at Clestrain. Sadly we do not have the space to print them here but you will find them on the JRS website. Editor

Hall of Clestrain

Archival Training Workshop

Summary Report

Dr Sarah Jane Gibbon



*Figure 1: Newhouse, Stenness
Screenshot from CANMORE*

An Archival Training Workshop was held in the Orkney Archive on Saturday 27th April 2019. The training was specifically tailored to be a hands-on introduction to researching rural buildings and properties and in particular the Hall of Clestrain.

Special thanks are extended to the Orkney Archive staff who supported this workshop.



*Figure 2: Some of the 17
workshop attendees (ORCA)*

The workshop was attended by 17 individuals all keen to help research the Hall of Clestrain. Due to the nature of the workshop, two ORCA staff were present to give those in attendance personal guidance with their research. Attendees' interests ranged from a general desire to learning more about the Hall of Clestrain to researching specific time periods within the property's history.



*Figure 3: Excerpt from
Dundas map of Barony, 1760
(OA:D8/W/20)*

The day began with Sarah Jane introducing the team, the plan for the workshop and the user

rules of the archive search room and Orkney Room (local studies collection).



Figure 4: Inspection of archive sources relating to the Hall of Clestrain (ORCA)

After this Sarah Jane gave a thirty-minute introductory presentation on rural-property archive resources. This presentation introduced the relevant online materials and explained the rationale behind Orkney's omission from some of the key National sources (i.e. not part of Mainland Scotland). After looking at online sources, map regression as a useful initial research skill was outlined and demonstrated using rural examples (Figure 1 & Figure 3). Following on from this, the Orkney Archive catalogue was introduced. The various ways in which to access and search it were shown and tips given on how to best use the

catalogue. Archive maps and charts, statutory sources, relevant private gifts and deposits and the value of these various evidence types were outlined using rural Orkney examples, before some interesting unexpected finds which can shed light on property history were discussed. Sarah Jane had made a preparatory search of 'Clestrain' items in the archive catalogue which was offered out as a printout and a research starting point for the remainder of the day (and any future visits any of the participants wish to make).



Figure 5: Hall of Clestrain by Tom Kent courtesy of Orkney Library and Archive

After the presentation and an opportunity for questions, the attendees were shown a range of Hall of Clestrain specific archive and published

resources that had been looked out in advance (Figure 4). These included some plans of buildings on the Clestrain estate; First Edition OS maps (Figure 1); census returns; sasines; archive photographs from early 1900s; Sheriff Court Records; published books featuring Clestrain and two maps showing the lands of Clestrain. People were shown how to access and navigate the National Monuments of Scotland Database – canmore – through the pastmap portal, how to access the National Library of Scotland Maps website, how to undertake geo-referenced searches and where to find the Ordnance Survey Namebooks whilst others were shown how to use the Archive catalogue.



Figure 6: An excellent turn out

Sarah Jane and Andy worked alongside the participants to explore aspects of the history of the Hall of Clestrain with the

aim of combining the information to create a timeline for the property with respect to the estate on which it is built.



Figure 7: D15/7/10 Receipt for march fence

The aim of the workshop was to prepare the attendees for undertaking rural property research with specific attention to the Hall of Clestrain and to encourage and enable people to undertake their own research in the Orkney Archive. The workshop achieved this and more, with several of the attendees determined to return to continue their research having gained confidence from the training offered.

John Rae September Weekend

This year, because of the 250th Anniversary of The Hall of Clestrain, we decided to have a further celebration to mark it. The planned visit of Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Secretary for the Arts and Culture happened to coincide with our arrangements. Her cause was to launch the Scottish Government's Arctic Policy document on Monday 23rd September. Invited to this were David Reid and Richard Smith of Arctic Return. They gave a presentation at the event supporting the announcement at the new Conference Centre on the Heriot Watt University, Stromness.

On the Saturday before we had an open day, which was the best ever attended. On the Sunday evening we hosted a Charity Auction for JRS at The Orkney Distillery in Kirkwall. Guests of honour were David Reid and Richard Smith. They were very happy to talk to members of their expedition and experiences. Special mementos of their amazing trek were offered as auction prizes too. A splendid framed map was fiercely competed for. A flag with the expedition

members' names was bought for the Society and other items from them certainly bolstered our funds. The evening was a sparkling success with over £3,000 raised. Highland Park donated a star auction prize of their Ambassador's Whisky Boxed Display. Good results were attained in the bidding, especially, I might add, The John Rae Pineapple, which reached £55.00 from one of the Secretary of State's lucky entourage! Fiona Hyslop was presented with silver earrings and a pendant from Sheila Fleet's new Arctic Stream range of jewellery. Billy Jolly and Andy Cant played for us. Harvey Johnston gave us a new rousing speech: great fun was had by all.

Following the Scottish Government's announcement about the Arctic, David Reid and Richard Smith presented a riveting and humorous talk at The Orkney Theatre about their expedition. The Maureen Findlay Dancers opened the evening with a beautiful performance of The John Rae Reel. The school children who created the winning flag designs for Arctic Return waved the explorers on to the stage. They presented David Reid and Richard Smith with Honorary Life Membership scrolls at the end of their

presentation. Highland Park provided whisky tastings and we served Arctic Roll and Pineapple juice.

The Maureen Findlay dancers performing the John Rae reel



Photo by JohnPeterWelburn ABIPP

The evening again was a great success. After and before their presentations David and Richard answered so many questions from an intrigued public.

The Arctic team were only too happy to go to Stromness Primary School, St Margaret's Hope Primary and Papdale. The youngsters were so attentive and keen on the whole subject of the Arctic and some already had a deep knowledge of John Rae and his life. A most popular subject was that of narwhals. Question after question on them came from each school. Such is the enthusiasm for John Rae and his Arctic within the schools that another visit from them would be most welcome in the future.

This was an amazing weekend supported by visitors from Canada, America, France and all over the UK. Hopefully we can continue the momentum of what we have here, particularly in the schools. JRS members of the future are there.

Andrew Appleby

More Volunteers Please!

We have some stalwart volunteers but could always do with more! We understand people may not be able to commit large amounts of time but if you could see your way to giving us a couple of hours now and then, please contact us (771419 or e-mail fursbreck@btinternet.com)

We would specifically appreciate help with

- Manning stalls at shows and open days
- Assisting guides at the Hall of Clestrain
- Preparing and serving refreshments
- Small clerical tasks
- Putting up posters etc.

The Board of Trustees would also welcome people who might like to join them, as numbers are small.

Co-op Cheque for the John Rae Society



Photo by JohnPeter Welburn ABIPP

Orkney Community Co-operative presented representatives from the John Rae Society with a cheque for £9,928 in Kirkwall on November 21st —a very handsome donation and one for which we are extremely grateful. The donation is timely: we are about to apply for funding to help create a development plan for restoring the Hall and turning it into a world-class visitor centre and community resource. For this we have to match any funding awarded. A development plan will put us in a stronger position in applying for large-scale funding.

A portion of the money will also help fit out the temporary visitor centre at the Hall of Clestrain, ensuring visitor and community engagement

throughout the Hall's renovation, as well as providing a warm place to meet.

Corporate Member: Skarabooks

Being President of The John Rae Society, I firmly believe in its aims and objectives. From experience I have come to realise that our Dr. John



Rae was a living example to those with whom he worked. The indigenous peoples he learned from and respected have forever returned that respect too. Their honour of him and his ways shows us his character, selflessness and honesty, which should be a marker for us all. Being dishonoured and side-lined by British culture in his time is a

lasting disgrace.

Skarabooks, my small publishing company, became a Corporate member of The John Rae Society for two main reasons. Firstly, my series of novels entitled 'Skara' are initially set in Neolithic Orkney, the Canadian Arctic and the Arctic Rim. Secondly I'm a constant forager, which comes out in the novels. My hero, Oiwa, travels unwittingly from his Tundra and Taiga homelands to Orkney. Shala, the heroine, lives in Neolithic Orkney near what is now known as The Tomb of The Eagles. With her mentor, Wrasse, they spiritually and supernaturally encourage the hero to reach Orkney.

Andrew Appleby

THE JOHN RAE BIRTHDAY DRAW

John Rae was by all accounts a modest and unassuming man who would have been astounded at the passion with which, nearly two hundred years later, his supporters defend his name and strive to see his childhood home

restored and turned into a lasting memorial. Those of you who live further afield seem to cherish every scrap of information we send you on progress towards our goals. Here in Orkney large numbers of people give time and effort to the cause — whether it be manning stalls at shows and fairs or doing running repairs to the Hall.

Davie Reid, JRS 'handyman' fixing a pipe



Photo by JohnPeter Welburn ABIPP

As reported earlier in this newsletter our next steps are to invest in a development plan (for which we are required to match the grant given). This will greatly improve our chances of obtaining larger amounts of funding.

We are not asking you to shin up ladders to fix pipes, but we are hoping you will, if you are able, buy or sell some of the enclosed raffle tickets. We promise to spend the money wisely.

Corporate Member: Kristin Linklater Voice Centre Ltd.



The Kristin Linklater Voice Centre is happy to contribute to this great community-based restoration project of John Rae's family home, the Hall of Clestrain. Bringing this childhood home back to life will revitalise the remarkable achievements of this heroic Orcadian explorer.

A dedicated museum will exhibit the role of the Orcadians in the history of the Hudson Bay company and will vividly highlight the importance of John Rae's contribution to the discovery of the North West Passage and the fate of the Franklin

expedition. The Hall of Clestrain and the John Rae Society will tell the story, largely missing from the history books, of Rae's great skill and bravery, and how his Orcadian curiosity, instincts and 'duggedness' helped him to adapt to the local Cree and Inuit ways, enabling him to survive the harsh conditions that had defeated many others.

These remarkable accomplishments cannot be fully appreciated in modern times without a tangible stage on which to revive John Rae's memory.

Kristin Linklater Voice Centre opened its doors in 2014 as a fully residential voice retreat centre in Orkney, offering a variety of voice and text courses throughout the year.

Kristin Linklater is a world-renowned teacher of voice production who has pursued a highly successful academic and theatrical career in the United States and Europe for the past fifty years. On retiring as a Professor of Theatre Arts at Columbia University in 2013, Kristin returned to her native Orkney to continue her legacy.

**Corporate member:
Adventure Canada**



**ADVENTURE
CANADA**

[Adventure Canada](#) is thrilled to support and be a part of the [John Rae Society](#). Our family roots are in Scotland and our business is Arctic exploration and tourism. We could not find a better partnership anchored by a shared value for the recognition of Rae's Arctic accomplishments and the preservation of history and heritage if we tried!

We've celebrated John Rae for many decades on our Arctic expeditions through the Northwest Passage, visiting many important historical sites, as well as through visits to Orkney on our expedition cruises to the Scottish Islands. It has been a great privilege to share the remarkable stories of a remarkable man with visitors from around the world through experts such as [Ken McGoogan](#) and [David Reid](#), both of whom join Adventure Canada expeditions regularly.

It has been a recent honour to formally join forces with the JRS in support of the restoration of the Hall of Clestrain. Our guests deeply value the opportunity to learn more about John Rae and to physically get to set foot at the Hall of Clestrain. We've heard this time and again from our guests, and we have seen motivation in action from our guests through our corporate fundraising to specifically benefit the Hall of Clestrain.

We're working diligently to raise the profile of John Rae in Canada and on our expeditions. In March 2019 we sponsored David Reid's [Arctic Return Expedition](#), which sought to re-trace John Rae's journey from Naujaat (Repulse Bay) in Nunavut across the Boothia Peninsula to Rae Strait in 1854. Reid, who spear-headed the expedition, is originally from Bishopton, near Glasgow, and much like Rae, has an infectious passion and enthusiasm for polar travel and exploration. The Arctic Return expedition, which involved a team of four who trekked 650 kilometres through ice and snow with sleds and skis, paid tribute to and raised awareness of John Rae. The journey honoured Rae's eagerness to learn from First Nations and Inuit

peoples, and promoted the restoration and conversion of the Hall of Clestrain into an interpretive Arctic History Centre.

We are proud to help preserve the legacy of such a remarkable explorer and look forward to returning to the Arctic region Rae loved so much on our 2020 Northwest Passage expeditions and back to the Hall of Clestrain in 2021 on our Scotland Slowly expedition.

Corporate member: Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors



RICS is the world's leading professional body for qualifications and standards in land, property, infrastructure and construction. For some time now RICS has been determined to get appropriate recognition for John Rae's

achievements in Arctic exploration and surveying land.

In September 2018 RICS appointed him as an honorary chartered surveyor and a posthumous RICS diploma was later awarded as part of RICS's 150th anniversary celebrations. An exhibition was set up in London of artefacts (on loan from the John Rae Society president, Andrew Appleby) together with photographs from Stromness Museum) pertaining to his life and surveying achievements in the Arctic.

Recognising Rae's feats in travelling over 13,000 miles in the Arctic and mapping 1800 miles of coastline, John Hughes, RICS President, says 'If he were born 50 years later, Rae would have surely become a member of RICS and many of the surveying skills he learned to map the Northwest Passage have been used by subsequent explorers.'

RICS continues to highlight Rae's success in surveying. In February 2019 he was voted the most inspiring surveyor in RICS' Pride in the Profession Mappers category.

Additionally RICS sponsored the *Arctic Return* team in their efforts to obtain recognition for this remarkable man's skill and qualities. RICS remain strong advocates for John Rae.

John Rae Society Membership Update

Note: we have recently revised our membership lists, using new systems.

<i>Type of Membership</i>	<i>Number</i>
Annual	66
Standing Order	99
Life	161

<i>Members by area</i>	
Orkney	99
Scotland	92
UK Other	85
Overseas	50

Forthcoming Events

Heart of Orphir Saturday 14th March 2020 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Orphir Community School Hall
Informal presentations of the Society's future plans for the Hall of Clestrain and an opportunity to contribute views and ideas. We would like as many representatives from different organisations in Orkney as possible. Photographic exhibitions. Free refreshments.

Prize Bingo

Doors open 6.45pm for eyes down 7.30 p.m.
Great prizes!

John Rae Festival Fri. 8th May to Sun.10th May 2020

Open Days at the Hall of Clestrain with foraging expeditions and shore walks. Other events to be announced

John Rae Birthday End of September (Exact date TBC)

Plans are for a charity auction, culminating in the John Rae Birthday Draw!
There will also be a meal at Sheila Fleet's Kirk Café. This will be a ticketed event. Details to follow later.

Visitors from afar

We appreciate the fact that many visitors have limited time in Orkney. If you are not here during one of our Open Days but would like to visit the Hall of Clestrain, do contact us and we will do our best to arrange something for you. We are always pleased to see visitors.

You can do this through our website:

www.johnraesociety.com or

by e-mail:

fursbreck@btinternet.com

or tel. 01856 771419

Gift Membership

Have you considered giving someone JRS membership as a present? Annual (single) £15 and (joint) £20.

You can arrange this through the website or by contacting the Member-ship Secretary.

Victorian Christmas Cards

I put my late husband's collection of about 100 Victorian Christmas cards, dating mostly from the 1890s on display at Skail House during the Craft Fair there on December 14th and 15th. They aroused a great deal of interest.

Several of you have expressed a wish to see them. If there is sufficient interest I could arrange something perhaps during the John Rae Birthday weekend in September. Please get in touch if you are interested.

Fiona Gould

Contributions for the Spring newsletter

I would be grateful for contributions for the next newsletter — articles, travel accounts, book reviews, in fact anything you think would be of interest to members.

Editor