

Aglooka Advisor
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The drawing on the front cover is one of several produced by Simpson and Brown for their Conservation Plan for the Hall of Clestrain and we are grateful for their permission to use it.

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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.

Project Manager's Report: The Hall of Clestrain Vision

"By 2025 The Hall of Clestrain will be an internationally renowned visitor centre sharing the true story and ethos of John Rae and Orkney's key role in Scotland's past, present and future connection with Arctic exploration and discovery."

With several failed attempts at sourcing funding to save the Hall of Clestrain, I am the first to admit this project was never going to be easy. However, with the unprecedented events over the last 6 months, where we have been engulfed by uncertainties surrounding the COVID19 virus and its associated restrictions, it's proved to be even more challenging.



I must congratulate the trustees on taking such a proactive approach, which has not only allowed the project to maintain full momentum but has ensured major advances in design and use, even during this extremely difficult period. Thank goodness for online technology! Microsoft TEAMS has been embraced by the board, allowing trustees to hold meetings online and remain actively involved in project development through regular online collaboration with the consultants, as well as myself.

Over recent years the John Rae Society has demonstrated a dynamic and successful track record, with 2018 seeing the purchase of the Hall of Clestrain, following a phenomenally successful fund-raising campaign, and latterly making the building wind and watertight. The employment of the project manager was followed by the purchase and installation of a temporary visitor centre in 2019. All of which has been successfully interspersed by numerous events, activities, outreach with schools' educational resources (John Rae boxes), culminating in the development of an online consultation survey earlier this year.



This along with the extraordinary commitment shown by John Rae Society volunteers, extremely generous donations to the Society, and lastly the financial and peer support of the Architectural Heritage Fund, Co-op Big Pay-out, Cuminga Trust and the Orkney Islands Council with their Community Development Fund, has enabled the Board to take truly 'giant strides' in progressing the planned Hall development.



We were extremely fortunate to have been able to commission John Sanders of Simpson & Brown – heritage consultants and architects (Edinburgh), a true Hall of Clestrain enthusiast, to produce a conservation management report. Luckily, John was able to travel to Orkney to assess the Hall and speak directly with the trustees before the lockdown commenced in March 2020.

Then in April, from a small but powerful group of tenders, Rob Robinson of Heritage Consulting (Edinburgh) was contracted to carry out a full

options appraisal and summary feasibility report, working in association with Simpson & Brown who were employed to produce the architectural aspects of the options appraisal along with associate costings by Angus Simpson of Ralf Ogg surveyors (Perth).

Project Proposal

A detailed options appraisal investigated three options for project. These evolved into a selected 'preferred' option, although with a capital cost of around £8 million plus VAT this was considered too large a project for the JRS to fund and deliver at this time. A three-phase approach was recommended and developed. The architectural designs, costs and business plan cover all three phases, while the funding and action plan is focused on phase one.

The full final project will be an award-winning centre combining heritage conservation with contemporary design and incorporating world leading renewable energy creation, retention and use. It will be an iconic building appropriately celebrating the memory of John Rae and providing a window into the world of Arctic exploration in the past, present and future.

The full proposals comprise:

- The courtyard area: includes the main entrance, reception and retail, temporary exhibition space and toilets. The main part of the courtyard will house the permanent multimedia and highly interactive exhibition.
- The main hall: in the basement we envisage a permanent exhibition with glass floor sections revealing the archaeology and original building fabric. The principal floor will include re-created room(s), exhibition and augmented reality interpretation, and the upper floor/attic will house the visitor or public education and research space.
- The west pavilion: houses the café, kitchen, store and toilets. The café will have indoor seating for approximately 50 guests plus additional outdoor seating.
- The east pavilion: is for dedicated community use, including a community meeting room, JRS office, toilets, plant and a space for academic research.
- Externally: the full project includes an Arctic garden and walking trails to the shore, parking for approximately 40 cars, including four disabled spaces and two coach parking bays.
- Renewables: will underpin the energy generation and needs of the building and are likely to include wind, a ground source heat pump and to a lesser extent, solar (PV and thermal), supported by high levels of heat retention through design and materials

Phase one, has a capital cost of £3,265,000 plus VAT and prioritises the main Hall and the west pavilion. This phase includes reception, retail and temporary exhibition in the hall basement, augmented reality interpretation on the principal floor and public research / education in the attic as well as the café in the west pavilion.

The overall concept of the John Rae Arctic Explorer Centre places the John Rae story at the heart of the interpretation, connecting the stories of the Hall of Clestrain, the Hudson's Bay Company, Canada and of Arctic exploration, past present and future.

It is expected that the experience will be highly interactive and experiential, allowing visitors to experience the times and adventures of John Rae and the hostility, beauty and fragility of the Arctic. The exhibitions are expected to have high levels of technology, including immersive experiences, supplemented by more traditional elements as well as handling items and opportunities to take part in both individual, genealogical and citizen science Arctic research.

Although the full experience will not be available until phase three, the concept runs through all phases and is to be expanded and improved, with phase one including augmented reality interpretation within the Hall.

I hope this has 'whetted your appetites'. We will be revealing the full findings of the Options Appraisal and feasibility report including some amazing design ideas, very shortly. We hope you will find the content of the reports consistent with the perceived aims of the John Rae Society and would welcome your constructive feedback. Please remember, it is with your support and financial commitment that these advances have been possible.

Join us...embrace the past to shape the future!



Sandra Deans Project Manager

The John Rae Challenge

As the chair of the Fundraising subcommittee of the JRS and a new trustee, I felt we had to come up with an idea which would be workable in the Covid19 lockdown and so would not involve social gatherings or events. This would involve a whole new way of looking at fundraising, making maximum use of social media and online communication. I was thinking about this when the phone rang and my daughter Cathy told me that she and her husband, who both work for the same company, had been instructed by their employers to spend one working day going out for a 10 kilometre walk, to tell all of their family and friends about it, and encourage them to contribute money to a health charity, giving them a target sum to aim for. I was impressed, contributed as suggested, and set to thinking about adapting this idea for the Society.



When next the Fundraising Committee met I outlined the plan, and we agreed to go forward with this, so we presented it to the next Trustees' meeting and got approval to proceed.

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Dr John Rae, aka Dr Jim Chalmers, rowing across the Rae Strait (about 14 miles)

In mid-September we launched the media campaign, about how the 30th September would be the 207th birthday of an extraordinary Scottish Arctic explorer and egalitarian, whose fame was quashed and his reputation tarnished by the London establishment

because of their prejudice against his values. John Rae is famous in his native Orkney, and in Canada. The time has surely come to raise him to the level of Scott, Shackleton and Amundsen in the general public's awareness, where he belongs.

There was a reference to the JRS website, to the campaign to establish a John Rae Centre, and to the need for everybody reading the articles to circulate it among their friends to increase knowledge of this pioneer.

The main theme of the 'Get your friends to sponsor you' campaign was put on to the JRS website to design your own challenge, then get your friends to sponsor you to complete a walk or a run or a cycle ride or any other challenging activity you have decided on to raise funds through our Justgiving page for the JRS and its campaign to build this Arctic centre. If your friends can be inspired to do the same, the Challenge can grow and our funds will benefit.

In the event we have had a lot of support already, with some inspirational and imaginative challenges by a number of people. Our President, Andrew Appleby, set himself the daunting challenge of wild swimming in Orcadian waters, completing the same number of swimming strokes as John Rae had walked miles in the Arctic! That was 3645 Arctic miles commemorated in 3645 swimming strokes in chilly autumnal waters. Andrew's challenge was very well supported, and got media coverage in the Orcadian. Another member of the society did a sponsored silence, another a rowing machine challenge, and a member in Bavaria did a sponsored chocolate delivery. Fiona Gould, our membership secretary, wrote a booklet about the history of the Hall of Clestrain from earliest known times to the present day, with an amazing amount of detail of the many family

histories involved in this one building. That too was sponsored, and will be available for members to buy. For my part, I undertook to cycle 300 miles, and have recently completed them. I appealed to my old Glasgow University buddies, the Modern Languages Class of '68, to support me, and they have responded very favourably!

So having read this, what might be your challenge? Finishing that 5000 piece jigsaw? Walking a part of the St Magnus Way? Completing that sweater you started knitting last June? Learning to play the banjo? The limits are only bounded by your imagination! Help the society while doing something you have set yourself, and in the process tell your friends what a good cause this is. We all want to see the Hall restored and repurposed for the twenty-first century!

To the left: the text of the email to friends, members and supporters, framed so it can be cut and pasted into communications. And below a poster.

Fed up with Covid? Tired of politics? How about doing the John Rae Challenge?

Help us put Dr John Rae, one of Scotland's greatest yet little-known Arctic explorers, firmly into the hall of fame where he belongs. Our project is to set up an Arctic centre in his name in his historic birthplace, the Hall of Clestrain, in Orkney. We really need more people to know about him, and we need funds, and this is where your friends come in. That's right, your friends.

All you have to do is set yourself a challenge, like a 5 or 10k walk, or a bike ride, or a swim. It does not even need to be a fitness challenge, it could be anything you and your friends know will be a real achievement for you, like reading *War and Peace*. Then tell all your friends you are doing this and ask them to sponsor you by making a donation on our Justgiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/JRS-Funds-Needed>

And encourage them to do the same with their friends, that way our appeal can go viral!



Liz McInally, Trustee and Chair of the Fund-raising group

A Dashing Young Frenchman

Joseph-René Bellot 1826-1853

On May 25th 1853 early in the morning a ship anchored in Stromness harbour. She carried a double flag, English and French!



It was the *Prince Albert*, chartered by Lady Franklin, wife of the famous explorer, Sir John Franklin, who had left eight years earlier with two ships and 128 men in search of the North-West passage, and of whom there was no news. The *Prince Albert* had returned from an expedition without having found any trace of Franklin, and was about to leave with a new crew: twelve men and two officers. One was Scottish, the other French! The Scotsman's name was William Kennedy. He came from the Orkney islands where he had studied before settling in Canada as a fur trader. The Frenchman's name was Joseph-René Bellot. Who was he? And why was he there?

Bellot was 23 years old, the eldest of six sisters and one brother, living in Rochefort sur Mer. His family was poor but as a gifted student he had won a scholarship and entered the Ecole Navale de Brest, from which he graduated as one of the top students. He had participated in 1844, alongside the English, in a campaign against Madagascar — something which impressed the English and during which he had been awarded the *Légion d'honneur* for an act of bravery.

This time was unusual for both countries: the

Napoleonic wars were over and Europe had entered a calmer period. Many ships remained in port and many sailors were without work. This was true for Bellot, who dreamed only of travel and adventure!

In the middle of the century the place for adventure was in far-off seas. Bellot had read about the polar explorers: Davis, Ross and of course Franklin whose fate was of concern to the whole of Europe. When he learned that Lady Franklin was preparing a second expedition to the Arctic and looking for volunteers, he asked the Ministry of the Navy for leave of absence without pay, which was granted. He wrote to Lady Franklin who received him in her London home. How could she resist this enthusiastic young man who moreover spoke perfect English? Without delay he was invited to go to Aberdeen and set sail on the *Prince Albert* on May 21st 1851. Four days later she reached Stromness in the Orkney Islands, where the ship's jib bowsprit had to be replaced. Mr Stanger, a builder in Stromness, offered to provide a new one. However, the weather was unfavourable and it was necessary to postpone the departure. This allowed Bellot an opportunity to explore the islands. We can follow him by browsing through his personal diary.

'Mr Watts and Mr Beckie, son of a banker from Kirkwall, came aboard with their offers of service', he wrote. With the formalities completed, the entire crew disembarked and proceeded to the Free Church, where a service was held in their honour. The church was full. *'Prayers are said for us and all the faithful are called to wish for our safe journey'*. Bellot was advised to visit two sites: St Magnus Cathedral in the capital. Kirkwall, *'the most beautiful and oldest of all those in Scotland after Glasgow'*; and Stennis, an important Neolithic site. He went there the next day and did indeed find the cathedral very beautiful but regretted that it was in a ruinous state. *'It would be a shame if the government did not think of maintaining such a monument!'* He visited Stennis in the company of the County Sheriff's lieutenant, Mr Robertson. *'I counted more than two hundred steps'*. Here he was *'transported several centuries back in time'*. He was so impressed that he

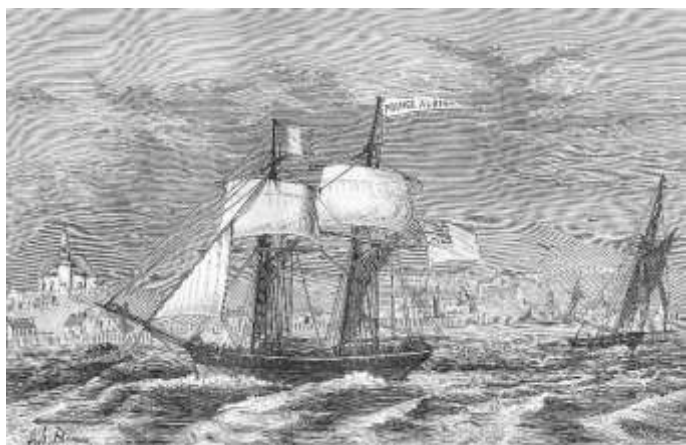
went back there, this time hiring a pony. The animal was not good-natured, showed its teeth, then escaped looking back at him with a sneer!

The two men found lunch in a farm near the stone circle. Their reception was courteous. There was no shortage of bread, ham and eggs. After he left, a young girl ran to join him to return a forgotten knife. Such honesty, he notes in his diary! Bellot also went to the nearby island of Hoy to visit the Dwarfie Stone, a tomb carved in a titanic block and located in a desolate peat marsh. The site is rough, the horizon black, the arid sides of the heights covered here and there with reddish heather. It is with a writer's pen Bellot evokes 'the great works of nature'.

The Frenchman received many invitations. Mr Robertson, for his part, '*does me the greatest courtesies and takes me to his house*'; a certain Mr Beckie took him to visit several churches; Dr. Wolf, mainly known for a trip to Bukhara, fascinated him with his stories; he dined at Mr. B's house on the Sabbath day (the day of rest). There they read the Bible and prayed together, with the servants also attending. Bellot has discovered that this is a society that welcomes him most warmly. '*Nothing*' he writes, '*is more false than the idea we generally have of these islands*'. He has found a '*very civilised world*', all the more endearing since '*everyone speaks French*'! One evening, after a cup of tea, the opportunity to dance the Schottische arises. '*We distance ourselves from the old father whose religious beliefs do not permit dancing*'. Does the dashing, young officer set the hearts of some young ladies a flutter? '*I confess that I am by no means insensitive to the charms of these young beauties and that Miss H, the white lily, and Miss W, the pink rose are no strangers to the pleasure of the evening, not forgetting Miss D.L. etc*'. The 'etc.' speaks for itself! In conclusion he adds, '*Why should I not represent French friendliness together with its ardent sensitivity?*' *I can say this without presumption, as my success is my excuse: I am complimented on my naturalisation and the ease with which I adopt the customs of the country*'.

Just before his departure Bellot went ashore to say goodbye. '*I am going to see Madame Rae, the explorer's mother. She asks me to embrace her son for her*'. But the two men will never meet, since at that time John Rae was also looking for Franklin and the North-West passage. And not only will Rae discover it but he will be the one to tell the world of the failure of the Franklin expedition. Fate means Bellot will not have time to learn this ...

The *Prince Albert* sailed on July 3rd 1851. After sailing along the west coast of Greenland, the ship entered the Lancaster Sound, then headed south by the Prince Regent inlet.



She wintered in Batty Bay on the east coast of Somerset Island. Bellot and four men undertook a 1265 mile sleigh ride (lasting 95 days) to Cape Walker on the north side of Prince of Wales Island, in the course of which they discovered a new strait — the Bellot Strait, named after the Frenchman. They found no trace of Franklin but this achievement earned Bellot esteem throughout England.

Back in France and aware of the prestige of Arctic expeditions, Bellot asked to lead a French expedition. In vain. Not wanting to spend an idle summer, he embarked on an English ship, *The Phoenix*, commanded by Captain Inglefield, taking supplies to Belcher's squadron which was searching for Franklin in the Wellington Channel.

At Beechey Island Bellot volunteered to take the Admiralty's mail to Belcher, some thirty miles away. Four sailors accompanied him. The small group was unfortunately surprised by a violent storm during the night of August 18th; this broke the ice across which they were travelling. Held prisoner with two men on a drifting ice floe, Bellot disappeared, probably blown into the sea by the gale. He was twenty-seven years old. Shocked by the tragedy, England erected an obelisk of Aberdeen granite at Greenwich on the right bank of the Thames in London. To this day he is the only Frenchman to have received such an honour.

Nadine and Jean-Claude Forestière

In Memory of Kristin Linklater (1936-2020)

Kristin Linklater has been a personal and family friend for many years. I first met her at her father Eric's 75th birthday party in Easter Ross. She had come over to Scotland from the USA for the occasion. At that time, she was running her own all-female Shakespeare Company. She made a big impression on everybody present and appeared so independent and of strong character. I hadn't really come across feminists at that time.

Then there was a long gap when I only heard of her until she visited her mother Marjorie in Kirkwall. Marjorie was a much-loved person, equally strong of character and very involved with Orkney's Heritage and the SNP. They had been out for the day at friends for lunch when she suddenly collapsed in the evening and died of a heart attack. Kristin was due to go back to Columbia University, New York the next morning. Needless to say, she stayed there. She was Professor of Drama and the idea of the Voice Centre probably was born in New York. So, when she retired, she made a fresh start in Quoyloo where she bought an old slightly dilapidated house with hidden treasures. She transformed the house into a civilized haven with room for guests and a large open kitchen where she entertained on many happy occasions.

There were gardens and grounds large enough to build the Voice Centre and, shortly after, the accommodation wing. Students came from all over the world just as she used to travel and teach. Her expertise was teaching Shakespeare and training future teachers in her method, for which she was famous. She published several books that became like Bibles to her students.

She lived a rich and busy life and possibly overstretched herself. Certainly, her death from a heart attack was untimely and a great shock to all who knew and admired her.

In Orkney I think her great achievement was directing Macbeth with local actors. The amphitheatre she had built in her grounds stands as a monument to her.

Andrew Appleby managed to persuade her to become a Corporate member of the JRS, for which the Society is grateful. Her memory remains strong in Orkney and worldwide. She's survived by her actor son Hamish who may well carry on her legacy, despite living as far away as Los Angeles. Internationality is the word of the Game.

Sigrid Appleby

JOHN RAE'S SCULPTOR – SOME NOTES ON JOSEPH WHITEHEAD

It's probably widely held that the contributors to the public subscription for the John Rae Memorial in St Magnus Cathedral were well served by their chosen sculptor, Joseph Whitehead. The public domain information about Whitehead is rather scanty but I've been able to fill out a fuller picture with the help of my 90-year-old father-in-law, Michael Whitehead, Joseph Whitehead's grandson.

It came as a great surprise to discover that John Cassidy's statue of Edward Colston, the one which was hurled into Bristol Harbour by protesters earlier this year, was created later (1895) than the John Rae Memorial in St Magnus Cathedral (1894). Cassidy's Colston, now probably rather dinged and dented, is a competent piece of public art of the Victorian age, larger than life size, made to stand above the crowd on its solid plinth. In contrast, the Rae memorial is on a human scale, at our level; it's no surprise that visitors can't resist touching it. In contrast to the standard Victorian worthies, the Rae figure and its presentation seem quite modern. The marble is as white as the Arctic snow, set off perfectly by the rough-hewed plinth of red sandstone that came from the same quarry as the stone of the cathedral's walls. Where Cassidy made a statue personifying power and influence, Whitehead created a sculpture, a work of art, a recognisable



portrait in marble of the man dressed in the clothing of the people of the North, asleep with his hands behind his head, open book fallen to one side, rifle at hand.

Joseph Whitehead was born in Aston, Birmingham, in 1868. His father, John Whitehead, was in business in Kennington, London. The business at that time, combined undertaking, funerary monuments, sculpture and a stone and marble yard. Nineteenth century domestic, civic, and church fashions moved the emphasis to marble sculpting and masonry. The business prospered and at some stage became J. Whitehead and Sons Limited.

There is no documentary confirmation but according to family oral history, Joseph Whitehead showed sufficient artistic talent to attend what were informally known as the 'South Kensington Art Schools', which later became the Royal College of Art. The precise dates are uncertain, but circumstances indicate the late 1880s. About this time, perhaps through the Schools, Whitehead became friends with two young artists who became well known: Frank Brangwyn (1867 – 1956) and William Walcot (1874 – 1943). The three young men went together on a trip to Carrara, in Tuscany, known from Roman times for its marble quarries. This trip was financed by John Whitehead, who had business connections in the area; the family still owns pictures of the quarry workings given by Brangwyn and Walcot.

Joseph Whitehead went on to attend the Accademia di Belle Arti di Carrara – this is where his talent as a sculptor was developed. The Rae Memorial, and Whitehead's other attributed works, all evidence the strength of this classical training. It was also in Carrara that Joseph found his wife; he and Ottilia Maro were married in 1893.

On returning to England, Joseph Whitehead joined the family firm and became principal sculptor and increasingly manager. He describes himself as a 'sculptor' in censuses until 1901 and in the 1904 probate application for John Whitehead's Will. Joseph took over as managing director in 1904 on his father's death and by the 1911 census, he was describing himself as 'marble manufacturer'. The firm prospered during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century and among numerous public works, designed and manufactured many of London's horse and cattle troughs. There was clearly enough money to pay for Joseph Whitehead's time in Carrara, and later, in 1904, the firm bought a former swimming baths at Kennington Oval and converted this to an extensive marble and stone works (The Imperial Works). The firm also had a studio at Vincent Square Westminster.

Despite his obvious talents, the number of early works attributed with certainty to Joseph Whitehead is rather small. Other than the Rae Memorial, a monument to Father Damien in Molokai, Hawaii (c1891), a marble statue of Charles Kingsley in Bideford, Devon (1906), and one figure in the bronze Titanic Memorial in Southampton (1914).

Eric Whitehead, Joseph's eldest son, then aged 18, was killed in an air crash in May 1918 and this must have influenced his approach to post-war commissions. The memorial to Second Lieutenant Daniel M. Duncan, 'Mother and Son', in the Woodside Cemetery, Paisley, an updated version of Michelangelo's 'Pieta' (c1920) is particularly moving. Another of Whitehead's bronze designs which bears only the company name, can be identified by style rather than signature: the figure of a cheering soldier celebrating the end of the war. (It is fair to comment that although the execution is excellent, the design may have been inspired by Sir James Frampton's Lancashire Fusilier Boer War memorial which, by some irony, is in Whitehead Park, Bury.) The Whitehead design was cast several times by the Thames Ditton Foundry and was installed in towns

War Memorial Nova Scotia

including Truro, Worthing, and Ebbw Vale during the early 1920s. Canadian members who would like to see an example of Whitehead's work can see a cast of the memorial bronze in Liverpool, Nova Scotia.

Regrettably, the archives of J. Whitehead & Sons are now extremely limited. There is no trace of why Joseph Whitehead was commissioned to sculpt the Rae Memorial nor any of the many preparatory drawings and instructions which would have been prepared.

The Brown Dog Memorial

There are some hints that he had a slight radical tendency which may explain his selection for both the Rae and Kingsley Memorials; both subjects were radicals in their way. He may even have met and been influenced by anarchists during his time in Carrara; it was apparently the centre of Italian anarchism at the time he was studying there. And Whitehead took on one commission which he must have expected to provoke controversy.

In 1903, William Bayliss, a member of the Department of Physiology at University College London, performed a vivisection on a dog before an audience of 60 which included Swedish anti-vivisectionists, who claimed that the dog was inadequately anaesthetised. In a subsequent lawsuit, Bayliss sued the Anti-Vivisection Society, which had condemned the operation, for libel and won. The AVS responded by raising £120 and commissioning Whitehead to produce a memorial statue. He created the 'Brown Dog' bronze which was, in 1906, erected in a Battersea Park. In the resulting furore, 'Brown Dog Riots' took place in 1907, and a 24-hour police guard had to be mounted over the statue for several years. In 1910, the local council, despite a 20,000-signature petition, had the statue removed at night by workmen guarded by 120 policeman and had it melted by the council blacksmith.



Joseph Whitehead's health deteriorated in the early 1930s and he withdrew from the business in favour of his surviving son. Joseph and his wife Ottilia moved to the Hampshire coast and worked with architect W. Hinton Stewart to create Creek House, Barton On Sea. In his 60s by then, Whitehead was still modern-thinking enough to build an art deco gem — with marble door frames of course.

Joseph Whitehead died in January 1951. Michael Whitehead doesn't recall that his rather taciturn grandfather ever talked about his life and work.

Alan Lamb

Archaeology at Clestrain

During lockdown, my wife, Sigrid and I decided to start the revamp of the wonderful cabin lent to JRS by Casey Construction as an interim visitor facility. This was an exercise in positivity, which we could happily achieve.

Whilst there, it became clear that the remains to be seen, emerging from the ground, could be easily exposed without any archaeological harm. Stonework at the northern entrance to The Hall of Clestrain was evident. A morning of turf removal exposed impressive stone curbing, which enclosed six neatly cut paving slabs.

We wanted to excavate from this feature along the north façade of the Hall to look at the relationships of this masonry with the original building and the West Pavilion. It was not wise for us to progress further without professional guidance. As the John Rae Society lacked any funding, we managed to enlist professional volunteers. We were extremely fortunate in securing Gail Drinkall and Paul G Johnson to help. Paul is a 'Retired' Buildings Archaeologist and Gail is Archaeology Curator at Orkney Museums.

This gave us the wherewithal to continue under expert guidance. Directly further work commenced, anomalies arose!

I will go back to earlier thoughts. The Hall of Clestrain is skirt on three sides by a 'moat.' This is basically a dry-stone dyke around a metre from the Hall. It is certainly not contemporary with the 1769 construction. The architecture determines that originally a much wider moat, or ha-ha existed. This must have been narrowed and backfilled sometime later.

In the census of 1851 it is recorded that several drainage engineers were living in the East Pavilion at Clestrain. This could give us an indication of the date of the works.

Wishing to establish the north courtyard levels, we excavated towards the west along the north face of the building. Looking at the 'moat' it became obvious that it continued along this northern aspect of the Hall. Photography from the West moat into a drain confirmed this. Suddenly, the whole aspect of The Hall of Clestrain changed in our minds! We discovered layers of compacted surfaces, ideal for a high status farm courtyard, overlaying an extremely fine drainage system, which allowed the moat to be filled, thus creating far more working space around The Hall.

After some weeks of volunteers' digging, we realized that a huge rectangle of ground was dug out to solid subsoil so that The Hall could be built within it. The sloping edges of the levelled area formed the 'moat'. The north side of this foundation feature was sixteen feet from the Hall's northern founds. We do not yet know the other dimensions. Maybe later?

Understanding all of this alters the original concept of the Hall of Clestrain. Formerly it has always been assumed that the south face of Clestrain was the most important. Agreeably it was very showy and grand, but this may have changed. The northern aspect is far more dramatic in the landscape as one approaches it. With a wide 'moat' it would have looked even more imposing.

Knowing that there was a road directly from The Hall to Coldomo Bay, where goods were shipped to Stromness as provisions on the shipping to Hudson Bay, this makes the NORTH aspect of superior commercial importance.

Back to the dig. Gradually the impressive drainage construction was revealed: basically, dry stonewalling covered with flagstones (Plate 1).



Plate 1

When a slab from the curbed entrance was removed, we found, as explained by Ivan and Jean Craigie, a flight of steps to the original floor level (Plate 3).

This we confirmed. However, the amazing drains must have had a relationship to this stair. We had noticed that under these steps there was a considerable void.



Plate 3

that a drain ran under this stair and was integral to its construction. Our finds have been most revealing. On a croft site you would expect plenty of lame ware (only glazed on the interior). We have found little of it. We have distinctly high status ceramics: High Fired china, porcelain and Scottish earthenware, but that is not too ordinary either. Sponge ware is common; we have found



Plate 2

We have, however the elaborate construction of the entrance to the door and ground floor of the Hall (Plate 2). As we all know, after the devastating tempest of 1952, the history of this Palladian building abruptly changed! A new farmhouse was built for the Craigie family and our Hall became the residence of pigs on the ground floor and hens in the attic. For the pigs the ground floor was filled in by 51cm with rubble, then concrete.

As drains do, they filled with water. However, during a rare dry spell, we cleared the base of the drainage stonework. This was magnificent and clearly earlier than the infilling construction we were dealing with. Superb quality slabs had been laid; the central ones had a semi-circular gutter carved into them.(Plate 4). This will have drained all surface water from the moat/ha-ha. We see this stonework within the existing moat, but it has been upturned for

some reason. Always on the last day of a dig you find something of consequence. On examining the relationship with the stair to the ground floor of the hall, we discovered



Plate 4

a few shards of that. What we have discovered is some extremely fine sponge ware, which is high-fired and has far more intricate decoration than for the norm. For negative evidence, we found no pieces of clay pipes!

Within the backfill of the drain and moat, interesting bones have surfaced. Bird bones, probably curlew and other waders; all likely John Rae targets; however, this cannot be proven it was he, as bird foraging was prevalent into the not too distant past. Mutton bones are present and indicate large and elderly animals. (I can personally attest to their sheer excellence.)

We conducted a non-intrusive clearance of the destroyed East Pavilion. We uncovered a rather poor quality cement floor, which overlaid earlier cobbles, which seem to be stabling. Some flags from a previous floor also remained (Plate 5).

On examining the relationship with the stair to the ground floor of the hall, we discovered that a drain ran under this stair and was integral to its construction. Just north of the splendid threshold stone, a mysterious stone kist was located. This was partially excavated as it extended towards our Cabin and could not be completely uncovered. A suggestion that it could have contained a lead tank as a horse trough is a possibility.



Plate 5

It seems that this pavilion was altered several times during its useful life and it required further study. One conclusion is that it was demolished to provide rubble to fill the Hall's ground floor to make it level for the piggery. Pigs do not like steps.

The team was encouraged by the interest taken by DigIt. We amassed quite a following. DigIt's artist made an excellent impression of what The Hall may have looked like in its former glory.

We have to thank Paul G Johnson and Gail Drinkall for keeping all the records of the excavations and finds; Marie-Claire Rackham Mann of Aegis Archaeology for her dauntless help; Robert Duncan, Sadie Parker, Thomas Foreman and further volunteers. Duncan McNeish and Brody Leroux deserve our gratitude for their stalwart work on the Cabin; Ivan Craigie who used his mechanical digger to clear ground and infill the excavations; and Casey Construction for JCB work.

Andrew Appleby

Photos by John Welburn ABIPP

Our new patron: Elaine Grieve



In the last newsletter we told you that the new Lord Lieutenant of Orkney had become our patron on the retirement of Captain William Spence in January this year. We would now like to tell you a little more about her.

She is the 21st person to hold this post but the first woman. A native of Orkney, she has had a career in education lasting over 30 years, starting as a primary school teacher then becoming a head teacher, before going on to become Assistant Director of Education. Subsequent to that she became Assistant Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services before retiring in 2011.

On retirement she took on new challenges, developing her musical talents and becoming Chairwoman of the Orkney Folk Festival.

She is interested in both the arts and in serving the community, as her work as Director of the Pier Arts centre, Director of Orkney Housing and Vice-Chair of Voluntary Action Orkney attests.

She is related to one of our new trustees, James Grieve, also a musician and committed to serving the community. We believe this could prove a promising partnership.

The Cuminga Trust

The aid of The Cuminga Trust to The John Rae Society over the years has been of immense help. They have supported our archaeology projects and Archive research. This has proven invaluable to learning the history of The Hall of Clestrain and continues to have an important effect.

Now they are active in assisting us towards the land purchase at Clestrain. The trust gave us a donation of £2,500 earlier this year, which represents half an acre.

Sadly, Ann Lowry Cumming passed away in Edinburgh on the 29th September. Ann and her late husband were life members of Friends of The Orkney Boat Museum, and then The John Rae Society.

The Cuminga Trust encourages educational and cultural projects in Orkney and elsewhere: The Orkney International Science Festival being one of them.

Our Society welcomes Cuminga's continued involvement.

News in brief

JRS Trustees

It is with great regret that we have accepted the resignation of Anna Elmy from the trusteeship. Anna was instrumental in setting up the John Rae Society and was an original member of the Events group, where she did sterling work with the late Xandra Shearer. She regularly attended meetings, even latterly when mobility issues made it difficult for her, and contributed to them. Her opinion was always respected. We will miss her.

Two other trustees, Jim Chalmers and Fiona Lettice, decided not to stand for re-election, although both have said they will continue to work for the Society, Fiona staying in post as treasurer. We appreciate all the work that both have done for the JRS and are grateful to them for continuing to work for the Society. We welcome three new trustees: Fiona Gould, James Grieve and Liz McInally.

JRS Annual General Meeting; 25th October 2020

The AGM was performed held online this year — our first virtual AGM. A benefit was that 23 members attended, from Italy, USA, Canada, Norway, England, Scotland and Orkney. In the light of this we will endeavour to make it possible for members to participate virtually next year.

The meeting was slightly curtailed. It began with a presentation from our Project Manager, Sandra Deans, on the Society's proposed development plans. The agenda was taken up with an examination of proposed changes to the constitution and with the election of new trustees. The changes to the constitution were largely to support the Society moving to a commercial enterprise in line with the business plan. Participants report that they enjoyed the meeting and we thank them for taking part.

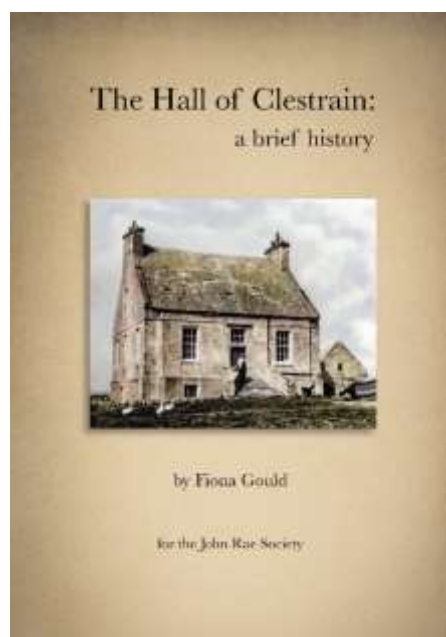
Membership Report

The membership has continued to rise slowly but steadily throughout the year.

| Type | No. | | By area | No. | |
|-----------|-----|------|----------|-----|------|
| Annual | 82 | 22% | Orkney | 110 | 30% |
| Corporate | 7 | 2% | Scotland | 101 | 28% |
| Honorary | 11 | 3% | UK Other | 96 | 26% |
| Life | 151 | 41% | Overseas | 60 | 16% |
| Patron | 6 | 2% | | | |
| TOTAL | 367 | 100% | | 367 | 100% |

The Hall of Clestrain: a brief history

can be purchased online For £6.00 or as a paper copy for £9.00. It is just over 5000 words in length.



To order a copy please go to the JRS web page www.johnraesociety.com/shop. The text will be updated periodically as new information comes to light.