

The
John Rae
Society

Aglooka Advisor

Winter 2021/22

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Cover design by James Grieve

www.johnraesociety.com

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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.

News in Brief

Trustees

At the AGM two serving trustees, Andrew Appleby and Norman Shearer, were re-elected for a further 3-year term. Andrew, therefore, continues as President and Norman, who stepped down from the role of Chair in 2020 because of ill-health, has resumed his duties, this time shared jointly with Liz MacInally who has been acting Chair for much of the past year. Three new trustees bring vital skills and experience to the board.

Cheryl Chapman is the Orkney Development Manager: industry and Development, for Visit Scotland, and is helping us with our publicity and advertising. She has already assisted us in securing excellent coverage in the local news and on social media.

Donna Heddle is the Director of the University of the Highlands and Islands for Northern Studies with an interest in Scottish and Northern Isles cultural history. With awards for course development and design, she is assisting us in planning events and raising awareness of the society's aims.

Alasdair Marwick is a member of the Orphir Community Council and will be assisting us in forming stronger links with the local community and with Orkney as a whole. He, too, is helping us with planning events.

Pilgrim Trust

In late November Sir Mark Jones, Chair of the Pilgrim Trust, visited the Hall of Clestrain with his wife and met with some of the trustees. He was given a tour of the building by Andrew Appleby. Sir Mark was impressed by the building's history and studied the archaeological evidence and copies of 18th century documents relating to the construction of the Neo-Palladian design with considerable interest. Some weeks later we learned that the Pilgrim Trust had awarded the society a grant of £35,000. This grant guarantees the services of our Project Manager, Sandra Deans, for another year. We are extremely grateful to the Pilgrim Trust for enabling us to do this, as Sandra does valuable work.

John Rae Spirit

The Society is inviting the public to choose 5 words from a shortlist of 10 selected by the JRS board which best describe John Rae. The five most selected will then be used to create a John Rae Spirit fund-raising campaign, starting in March. We will be sending out more information once the survey is complete. (Closing date February 28th). For details see the website www.johnraesociety.com

Project Manager's Report

Wow! 2021 went fast, didn't it? I can't determine if it was better or worse than 2020 because the collective sense of uncertainty was interspersed with periods of great hope. You'd be right in thinking that maintaining project direction in these unprecedented times might be considered almost impossible, but, in reality, we have found that the planning process has been even more important, allowing time to stop, or at least slow down, and think about the project outcomes. From a project management perspective, this process has been both frustrating and at the same time, constructive.

With the advice given by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) that an Expression of Interest (EOI) application would be better made later in 2021, there was another delay to this essential project development funding. This has placed additional pressure on the project timeline and funding avenues for the existing pre-development stage. Because of these delays, a number of pre-development funds have been 'maxed out' and it is clear these funding sources will come to an end in the near future. Unless success is found through a NLHF application or through government structure funds route, it will be extremely difficult for the Society to maintain the current level of support from consultants and the project manager. Fortunately, after a visit to site and successful application, the Pilgrim Trust has offered to finance the project manager position for 2022.

We are also delighted to say that the project has been accepted on to the Historic Environment Repair Grant programme. A formal award letter has been received which confirms their decision and outlines the next stages of the grant assessment process, as well as the conditions of the grant. A District Architect visited the Hall in order to complete their Technical Advisory report. This report will outline Historic Environment Scotland's (HES) recommendations regarding the repair needs of the property which is the starting point for any grant award.

With all the large-scale delivery funders that are keen to invest in the project, a fully guaranteed funding project plan needs to be in place before they will commit any of their money, which is only natural when you are talking about investing millions. It's a bit of a 'chicken and egg' situation, which is logistically challenging but nevertheless one with which the funders are familiar. Luckily, HES are used to working in conjunction with other funders and as such are known to be flexible in funding claim timescales. This is particularly pertinent with the delay in National Lottery Heritage funding.

HES reminded us that the planning process is separate from the grants process and that listed building consent/planning award is required before any formal grant award is made and before any work can begin. All the relevant parties need to investigate the building, the surrounding area and archives, to build a picture of what the Hall once looked like, draw conclusion on the North/South axis debate and determine how this affects the final development, particularly the final design and position of the Arctic Centre.

With both exciting and challenging project news received from HES over the summer, it is apparent that the Society will have to work closely with the HES listed building section, Orkney Islands Planning, and Simpson & Brown, whose remit it is to provide the project with the necessary advanced conservation expertise, if we are to achieve planning and listed building consent for a full working Arctic Centre. Again, we are very fortunate that these consultant costs will be picked up by Architectural Heritage Fund, who have continued to be very supportive in this phase of the project.

This investigation and consultation process does not affect the HES repair grant award nor another NLHF EOI being made within the suggested timeframe. The Society must gain listed building consent and planning permission on Phase One and Two as they stand, or with minor changes made, if deemed appropriate. Fortunately, they have been developed as standalone phases and HES do not seem averse to the pavilion concept.

Concern was expressed about safe public access, particularly with planned visits by funders and professionals. Additional floorboards, props to support the floor joists and barriers to safely segregate the worst areas of decay were installed in November. We now have a H&S report speaking to the safe access to the Hall, although we know that this is not a particularly safe environment for the general public, and caution should be foremost whilst navigating around the buildings.

A Covid-delayed presentation was finally given to the Orphir Community Council by the PM which went down well, with the project and initial designs receiving support from the whole committee. Alasdair Marwick was nominated as the key CC representative to interact with the JRS Board and, as of the AGM in December, he became a fully-fledged trustee. The Board welcomed this partnership with the Orphir community council, and they are working closely with a diverse range of groups and organisation within Orkney to determine if and how the proposed centre can be used as a facility for outreach services. Exciting times....

Identifying, building and maintaining relationships with the local, national and international stakeholders who share a common vision with us will be critical. Understanding the local need and looking at what the project can do for others, rather than naturally concentrating on physical outcomes and what others can do for the project, will be key to success. In following this path, assisted by the trustees' passion and commitment, this project will and has become much more sustainable in the eyes of prospective investors and the local community.

I truly hope that 2022 will provide us with the opportunity to finally work at the necessary pace and scale that will see the project visibly move forward. Fingers crossed!

Sandra Deans

JRS Project Manager

19th January 2022

Avataq Cultural Institute:

42 years of preserving cultural heritage for Nunavimmiut

Nunavik is the Inuit region of northern Quebec. It is one of four separate administrative regions in the Inuit part of Canada known as Inuit Nunangat. The other three are Nunatsiavut (Labrador), Nunavut Territory, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Inuit Nunangat has a human occupation that extends back at least 4500 years. Inuit arrived to Arctic Canada roughly 800 years ago, travelling from Alaska with ancestral routes in Siberia. Before this, the land was inhabited by other Arctic peoples referred to collectively as Pre-Inuit.

Avataq Cultural Institute was created in 1980 at the behest of Nunavik's elders, with the mandate to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of Nunavimmiut (Inuit of Nunavik). Avataq's head office is in the community of Inukjuak, on eastern Hudson Bay, while another office is in Montreal. Over the last 42 years, Avataq has assembled large collections of oral histories, place names, Inuit art and archaeological materials. Much of this is housed currently in Montreal, until appropriate climate-controlled facilities can be built in Nunavik.

The name Avataq refers to the inflated sealskin buoy traditionally used for hunting marine mammals – the buoy is attached to a detachable harpoon head, which comes off and lodges in the animal's body. The buoy serves as a float to locate the kill. Hence, the choice of name represents Avataq's mandate to keep Inuit cultural heritage afloat.

Recent projects underway at Avataq include the ongoing translation and transcription of oral histories; interviews stored at Avataq date as far back as the 1960s, with Inuit elders long-passed – some of whom were born in the 19th century. The documentation centre also houses a large collection of historical photos related to Nunavik. At present, the Inukjuak office is working on a commemoration of the centennial of Robert Flaherty's famous documentary *Nanook of the North*, filmed in Inukjuak in 1922.

Avataq also has a genealogist who traces family lineages and supplies Nunavimmiut with their family trees. A large database of traditional place names is maintained through the Nunatop project, which provides maps of place names at a variety of scales.

The archaeologists of Avataq have been working on a unique petroglyph site located near Kangiqsujuak, where over 180 faces were carved into a large soapstone outcrop at least 1000 years ago by Dorset peoples – who lived before ancestral Inuit. This site has been selected by the Canadian government to be submitted for consideration as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Avataq's archaeologists are working on preparing this application.

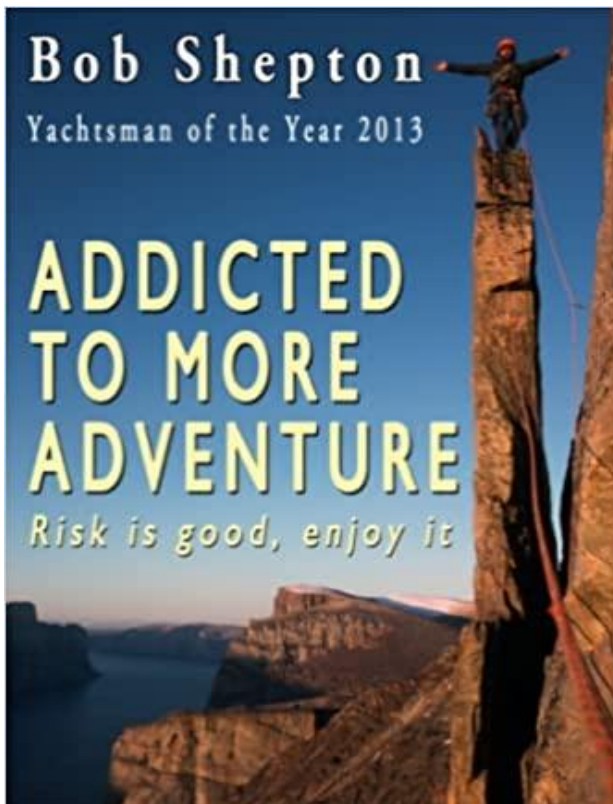
Avataq has a museum reserve where artwork, cultural and archaeological artifacts are housed. The reserve's staff catalogue and preserve the collections and assist with requests for exhibition loan items. One project currently underway is the development of an interpretation centre and preservation of an old Anglican

church in Kuujjuaraapik. The church dates back to the 1880s, brought in flat-pack form from England, and is likely the oldest standing building in Nunavik.

Avataq's link with the Orkney Islands comes through the Hudson Bay Company's fur trading activities in Nunavik that date back to the mid-18th century, when the first trading post to target trade with Inuit was established in Richmond Gulf near present-day Umiujaq. This post was unsuccessful and lasted only 9 years; direct trade with Inuit did not really take off until the 19th century. During the first half of the 19th century, longer-term posts were set up at Great and Little Whale Rivers (Kuujuaraapik and Qilalugarsiuvik) along south-eastern Hudson Bay and Fort Chimo (modern Kuujujaq) on the other side of Nunavik at the bottom of Ungava Bay. Many trading posts employees came from the Orkneys and traces of Scottish influence are seen in the plaid shawls worn by Inuit women, and the tradition of square dancing along with accordion and fiddle music.

Susan Lofthouse
Archaeologist
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Avataq Cultural Institute

Addicted to More Adventure



Those of you who enjoyed Bob Shepton's talk might like his latest book *Addicted to More Adventure*, published by Amazon in November 2021.

Bob gave up sailing at 85, not because of his age, but to support his wife's battle with Alzheimer's.

An account of this is given in a BBC programme, *Farewell to Adventure*, broadcast in October 2021 and available on I-player for several more months.

Dr John Rae –an Uncommon Man

In this century John Rae's achievements as an arctic explorer have finally been recognised, although undoubtedly not to the extent which he deserves. It is ironic that Rae is more widely revered in Arctic countries than in Britain. The Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen greatly admired Rae and followed his practice of using native technology, adopting native clothing and living off the land, when he sailed through the North-West Passage fifty years after Rae first discovered it. But it is not the purpose of this article to add to the complaints about the unjust treatment of Rae, but rather to comment on the many qualities of the man which would make him remarkable in the twenty-first century and not simply in the nineteenth.

Much has been recorded about Rae's extraordinary strength and stamina. Famously he walked 65 miles in a day on snowshoes, carrying a day's provisions, blanket and tools on his back, and could paddle a kayak for long distances, once going nine miles against the current in order to carry a friend to safety. But he was more than a man of muscle, his intellectual abilities at least matching his brawn. Accepted for a medical degree at sixteen, he qualified at nineteen, and continued to add to his medical knowledge while working in Arctic Canada. Later (1853) he was made an honorary Doctor of Medicine by McGill University. A year earlier the Royal Geographical Society had chosen him for their highest honour – the Founder's Gold Medal – for his contribution to surveying and mapping previously uncharted coastlines in the Arctic. Some years after, in 1880, the Royal Society made him an Honorary Fellow, in recognition of his contribution to various scientific subjects. These awards alone demonstrate Rae's considerable intellectual prowess.

For the task of surveying and mapping the Arctic coastlines Rae was forced to rely mostly on self-tuition in astronomy and in the use of the various instruments he needed for the purpose, as he was unable to receive the instruction he had hoped for from the Hudson's Bay Company surveyor, who died shortly after Rae journeyed to him. Characteristically Rae studied books on the subject, including an earlier publication by officers of the Hudson's Bay Company¹, and had instruments recalibrated to his satisfaction. In addition, he undertook to record information on the flora and fauna of the lands he traversed, as well as on geology and mineralogy. He meticulously recorded details of all he saw, collecting specimens of small mammals, birds, fish, plants and rocks, all of which were valuable to specialists in the subject and the details added to definitive scientific lists of that period. At the same time, he was recording temperature and prevailing winds, in addition to the amount and condition of the ice. His particular interest was in ornithology² and some years later, when asked to deliver a lecture at the University of Toronto, he chose as his subject *Patterns of Migratory Birds in the Arctic Region*.

Because, unlike any other European previously, Rae had chosen on his expeditions to live off the land instead of carrying supplies, he relied on hunting, fishing and foraging for food. Like the indigenous people, he killed only as much as he needed and could show compassion for his prey. On one occasion he so admired the spirit of a partridge defending her brood, he spared both her and her young. But on another as *the state of our larder did not permit us to be merciful* the *poor deer* was shot after a long chase. He respected deer because they would defend themselves even when brought to bay, unlike the wolves who sometimes threatened them but who were surprisingly passive in defeat.

In modern terms Rae would be described as having good interpersonal skills. He was a responsible and caring leader, always carrying his own equipment and his share of supplies, and willing to take on more if someone was incapacitated. He chose his expedition members with care and praised their qualities in his reports. He helped his men with literacy and numeracy and saw to their welfare, delaying his departure on one occasion by several days because his interpreter had a severe wound in his arm which needed medical attention. He was a good judge of character and knew when someone was dishonest or shirking their duties but was always fair. When two Indians requested not to work on Sundays, he agreed, thinking it might be a matter of conscience (although he was doubtful in one case.) He allowed his men to smoke in the house, even though he detested the smell of tobacco and the air was thick with it, because he realised smoking was a source of comfort to them and *a trifling inconvenience* to himself in comparison.

He was devoted to his family, writing regularly to his widowed mother in Stromness and sending her delicacies such as buffalo tongues from Canada. He asked Sir George Simpson, his employer at the Hudson's Bay Company, to assist his niece's³ husband, George Jobson, in finding employment more suited to his capabilities. He enjoyed the company of his younger brother, Thomas, and spent time with him in Hamilton, Ontario, while Thomas and their older brother Richard attempted to restore their finances after a failed shipping enterprise. It was a great sadness to Rae that he and his wife, Catherine (Kate), were unable to have children themselves but he continued to send gifts to his sister, Marion's, grandchildren⁴ in his later years.

On his expeditions Rae encountered many Esquimaux⁵ and Indians, whom he invariably treated with respect. Often they were wary of Europeans but Rae would dispel their fears with signs of peace and by shaking hands, and they would soon all be on friendly terms. He was generous in trade transactions, bestowing some gifts and paying fair amounts for what he bought. He would record their names, spelling them out in syllables, and giving the English equivalents where he could. As well as learning practical skills from them, such as fishing techniques and building snow houses, he showed interest in their customs, their family structure, their burial practices and their mythology. On his own admission he could never master

native languages, but despite this, managed very comfortable relationships with the indigenous people.

It is now fairly well known that when the report of cannibalism among the last survivors of the Franklin expedition reached London, there was public outcry. Charles Dickens, keen to transfer blame to the Esquimaux who were the source of the report, traduced them as *babbling and false savages, who are, without exception, covetous, treacherous and cruel*. If cannibalism had taken place, he declared, it must have been the Esquimaux who committed this crime. In calm and measured prose, Rae replied to Dickens, defending the Esquimaux as trustworthy and adding that *in their domestic relationship they show a bright example to the most civilised people. They are dutiful sons and daughters, kind brothers and sisters and most affectionate parents*.

On 30th September 2021 Canada had its first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, in recognition of the dreadful treatment of indigenous children between 1831 and 1998. Rae would have strongly approved of this development, and by a strange coincidence this date is the anniversary of his birth: he was born on 30th September 1813. In the twenty-first century people still need to be prompted to be inclusive and appreciative of diversity when dealing with and speaking of their fellow beings. Two hundred years earlier Rae needed no such prompting. This alone marks him out as an 'uncommon man'.

Notes

¹ Simpson (1844) Narrative of the Discoveries of the North Coast of America, effected by the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company during the years 1836-39.

² In his journal Rae discusses in detail differences he has observed at Moose Bay over a period of 10 years between a snow goose and a 'blue-winged goose' (so termed by Edwards in 1750), pointing out seasonal variations in the colour of plumage in the young and some difference in size.

³ Helen Rae, the natural daughter of John Rae's elder brother, James, married George Jobson, a coastguard in Hoy. Rae considered Jobson to be capable of a 'higher situation'.

⁴ During an interview with Rae's sister, Marion, in 1887, it is recorded that a parcel of books for her grandchildren arrived, sent by Rae from London to Canada.

⁵ The name 'Esquimaux' was the term in common use at this period and used by Rae himself.

Sources

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Finding John Rae. Hamilton, Jane. (2017). Ronsdale Press. Vancouver, Canada.

Fiona Gould

Archaeology at Clestrain 2021

Our excavations were limited this year due to sudden other commitments of volunteers. However, they were redesigned to answer and ask several questions. The Hall of Clestrain seems to have been built in a vast building pit or terrace. We wanted to find the depth of this. We removed a section of the 1850 drain when there was a considerable makeover of The Hall and grounds. The retaining wall around the hall was erected at this time and the terracing filled in behind this wall.



A new Northern entrance with stone steps down to The Hall was built at the same time as the massive drain, which went along the north facade. Then the north courtyard was filled over and levelled to cover the drain. We wanted to establish the depth of the sequence of layers down to the original build. The large drain was built on a line of beautifully fashioned gutter

Drain along the north wall of the Hall

stones. Behind them was a flag pathway, which led to the west corner and turned along the west gable. This pathway may well have gone all round the hall.

The stone gutter, we feel is of the 1769 build and John Rae will have been familiar with it. The threshold he knew will have been very close to that level. To establish whether this drain feature was original to the site, we dug below its level by 16cm into layers of midden infill. This stone gulley drain must have been later than the original building of The Hall of Clestrain. We have more work to do to establish that date.

We examined the East wall of the West Pavilion by excavation. It showed the walls of the pavilion going deeper than previously imagined. After accurately recording the 1950s flagstone floor within, we removed half a broken slab and dug beneath. It was laid on shore shingle. Various sherds of Victorian and early 20th century pottery came to light in layers of midden beneath. We probed deep below with my special stick to a probable stone surface. This seems to be over two feet down.



The North steps descending

It is certain that the north courtyard of The Hall of Clestrain looked very different in John Rae's time than it does now.



The Society is extremely grateful to Paul Johnson for directing the dig, and Gail Drinkall for dealing with the finds, and of course the other volunteers.

We had two visitor days where over eighty folk came and saw the excavations. Everyone enjoyed their experience, donated and some joined JRS.

Looking into the drain with the carved gully stone. Note how the gully goes under the step structure. The slab underlying the drain wall is part of the path round the Hall.

Andrew Appleby. Photographs by Paul Johnson

Archaeology 2022

The 2022 excavations will run from Monday 13th June to Friday 15th July. We hereby invite volunteers. We expect folk to work at least three consecutive days and are encouraged to do more if possible. Packed lunches are recommended. We have coffee and tea making facilities and there are flush toilets at the end of our site cabin, kindly loaned by Casey Construction.

The objectives for this year are to discover the actual depth and get an idea of the extent of the cutting/terracing for The Hall and its possible date of original construction: the outflow of the drain on the western side of the stone gutter: and the depth of the West Pavilion. We would also like to take out a section of the concrete flooring of the pigpens in the ground floor to see how far down the floor beneath lies and its construction.

To volunteer, please email president@johnraesociety.com

The Graveside Ceremony

Every year we mark the anniversary of John Rae's birth (30th September 1813) with a brief ceremony at his grave in the kirkyard at St Magnus Cathedral. In 2020, because of restrictions, only two people were able to carry this out but last September a small gathering of towards 20 people attended. They were piped to the graveside by Sinclair Scott, who gallantly stepped in to perform this service at short notice. He played the haunting melody *The Battle of the Somme*, followed by a hymn. Elaine Grieve, Lord Lieutenant of Orkney, then gave an address. With her permission, Elaine's address is printed below.



Photo by Brian Findlay

Dr John Rae, Graveside Address

It is an honour as Orkney's new Lord-Lieutenant, to stand here, on this day, at the grave of Dr John Rae – physician, explorer, Orcadian. As a youngster growing up in Kirkwall I was fascinated by the history of the town, its stories, its secrets - which I learned by spending many, very many, hours in the museum. I loved the stories behind the street names and was fascinated by the old buildings. Most Saturday afternoons were spent exploring the Earl's Palace, racing up the 'Moosie Toor' and, finally, wandering through our magnificent Cathedral. There, I would while away the time reading inscriptions, marvelling at the beauty of the stained glass, and shiver at the thought of becoming stuck in the darkest recesses of the walls. As often as I could, I would clamber up the steps leading to the bell-tower and out onto the turret to take in the view of the town and beyond. But, without fail, each outing would always end with a visit to 'the sleeping man'. I was fascinated by his story, the way he was dressed, his rifle burnished by the touch of many a hand. Sir Edmund Hillary, no stranger to exploration and physical challenges said, 'People do not decide to become extraordinary. They decide to accomplish extraordinary things.' This can surely be said of John Rae, who, as a child and young man growing up here in Orkney, became an accomplished game hunter, fisherman, sailor, horserider and rock climber, revelling in the outdoors and proud of his own fitness. Although he had much to learn, he already possessed the most important skills that would serve him all his life. As he embarked upon his journey to take up his position as surgeon with the Hudson's Bay Company, he took with him that quiet Orcadian pragmatism, forging relationships with those who knew the land best, and learning the skills necessary to utilise the harsh environment to his advantage as he explored the unknown reaches of northern Canada.

We owe Dr Rae a great deal. He has taught us much, not only about endurance and perseverance, but also of humility and dignity. So, on this day, we remember you, we celebrate you, and, we thank you.

Elaine Grieve, Lord Lieutenant of Orkney

2021 Arctic Club Dinner

Members may recall that we sent out details of the Arctic Club's annual dinner which was held in Edinburgh on December 11th. Below is a report on that event which the JRS president, Andrew Appleby attended. (Ed.)

The New Club Edinburgh was the venue for this year's event. The president for year 2021 was Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen, who sadly was prevented from travelling from Denmark, and John McGregor, a past president and New Club member, was invited to deputise for him. The New Club, Edinburgh, founded in 1787 is located in an impressive building on Princes Street at the very heart of the city. The annual dinner was held at the Club in 2018 and Members and guests were extremely complimentary about the dinner and the Club facilities. 2021 was as good if not better than the previous experience.

The evening began in the Long Room at 17.00 with two illustrated presentations of recent expeditions, available via Zoom to members on the internet. These are normally delivered by holders of awards given by the Arctic Club. In both 2020 and 2021, several awards were made, but due to the Covid situation and restrictions on travel, only *In the Wake of Gino Watkins* was able to achieve its goal. Jeff Allen and Isabelle Howells gave a very comprehensive and well-illustrated talk on their expedition, sailing to east coast Greenland and following in Watkins' footsteps and kayak trips. <https://www.expeditionpaddler.com/about/>

The second presentation was by Peter Mikkelsen, our President, who told us of his lifetime experiences patrolling the east coast of Greenland. His book *One Thousand Days with Sirius; the Greenland Patrol* describes this in greater detail and he now returns to his favourite part of the world, to repair the huts which have been there as sanctuaries for visitors and are often damaged by the weather or polar bears.

The President also conducted the AGM, with all motions carried, following which members and guests were encouraged to proceed to the New Club's members bar for mulled wine, followed by a three-course dinner in the main dining room. It is a tradition with the Club that there are no speeches, and so only notices about next year's president, Paul Rose, and the location of the bar for post prandial refreshment were given, along with the customary toasts.

On Sunday morning, tea and coffee was served in the Long Room and we had one further presentation by Jesse Dufton and his wife, Molly, on circumnavigating the Stauning alps on skis, undertaking ice measurement for scientific research and climbing several unclimbed peaks. It was a splendid story and made even more of an achievement because Jesse is totally blind. For further details see <https://jessedufton.com/achievements>. There followed an introduction by Paul Rose (<https://www.paulrose.org>) our next president, about his career and his hopes to make the public more aware of climate change through promotion of facts (not fiction) about what is happening in our world. Arctic Club secretary Penny Goodman deserves a special mention for her tireless attention to detail and her organising skills. Particularly when herding explorers and adventurers.

John McGregor

The John Rae Explorer Scouts

Almost three years ago the Orkney Scouts went through a process of reformation and decided to rename themselves 'The John Rae Explorer Scouts'. They took their affiliation with the explorer seriously and at least one investiture took place at the Hall of Clestrain, at the new recruit's request.



Following this, they were keen to have a new badge. The JRS patron, Michael Palin, generously donated a sum of money to cover design and manufacture of new badges and JRS trustee, Mark Newton, worked with scout Zoe Hopkins on the design.

But restrictions delayed production and opportunities for presenting the badges. Finally, at the insistence of Davie Reid, who has been a tireless supporter of the Scouts and the John Rae Society for many years, a presentation was arranged in December. Norman Shearer, joint chair of the Society, presented the badges at a Scout meeting on 11th December. The scouts were delighted with them.



Photos by James Grieve

Online Talks

Last year, as most of you know, we arranged a series of online talks as there appeared little prospect of being able to hold any physical events. These were very successful and people attending seemed to enjoy them. Three of these are now available on the website for free download. They are:

Dr Ken Stewart: Forgotten hero: now discovered

Ken, a JRS member for many years, has studied Rae's writings extensively, including unpublished items and is extremely knowledgeable about him. He talks about Rae's childhood, his medical training and his arctic journeys.

Reverend Bob Shepton: Greenland and Baffin with the wild bunch

Bob is an intrepid sailor who has made many trips in the Arctic in his yacht *Dodo's Delight*, sailing through the North-West passage twice (in each direction). The wild bunch, passionate climbers of vertical cliff faces, are also musicians and a good time is had by all. Photographs taken by Ben Ditto, one of the Wild Bunch, throughout the trip, are stunningly beautiful.

Tom Addyman: The Investigation and Salvation of a Most Precious Survival

Tom is an archaeologist with a passion for restoring old buildings. He has visited the Hall of Clestrain and studied it minutely. He talks about the structure of the Hall and details numerous clues which will allow for an accurate reconstruction of the buildings when that takes place.

You will find the talks on the home page of the JRS website, in reverse chronological order. www.johnraesociety.com

Talks for 2022

Dr Martyn Obbard: Polar Bears of the Eastern Canadian Arctic



Dr. Martyn Obbard is an Emeritus Research Scientist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and adjunct professor in the Environmental and Life Sciences Graduate Program at Trent University (Peterborough, Ontario). He retired in 2016 after a 32-yr career with the Ministry, including 28 in the Wildlife Research Section studying black bears and polar bears in Ontario. He is a

member of the IUCN-Species Survival Commission's Polar Bear Specialist Group, a member and former chair of the Polar Bear Range States Conflict Working Group and is a former Chair of the Canadian Federal/Provincial/Territorial Polar Bear Technical Committee. In retirement, Martyn leads small-group tours to Churchill, Manitoba for polar bear viewing and has participated in three Northwest Passage cruises.

Dr Obbard talks about polar bears in the mid nineteenth century and at the present time. *

Sara Wheeler: The Magnetic North: notes from the Arctic (February 16th 6.00 p.m. GMT)

Sara Wheeler is a prizewinning broadcaster and non-fiction writer whose ten books include the international bestseller *Terra Incognita: Travels in Antarctica*. The Sunday Times found her last book, *Mud and Stars: Travels in Russia with Pushkin and Other Geniuses of the Golden Age* 'Superlative'. Of her biography of one of Captain Scott's men, Jon Krakauer wrote, 'Utterly fascinating. *Cherry* is a wonderful book.



In *The Magnetic North* Sara Wheeler takes us on an illustrated, personal tour of the circumpolar Arctic – sailing on a Russian icebreaker out of Murmansk, herding reindeer with Sami and shadowing the Trans-Alaska pipeline with truckers. She discovers a complex and ambiguous land belonging both to ancient myth and modern controversy. The talk offers a spicy confection of history, science and reflection in which Sara meditates on the role of the Arctic: fragmented lands which fed imaginations long before the oilmen showed up (not to mention desperado explorers who ate their own shoes). The book of the talk, also called *The Magnetic North*, was chosen as Book of the Year by Michael Palin, Will Self, A.N. Wilson, Robert Carver and others.

Ken McGoogan: The Role of Indigenous People in Arctic Exploration (March 9th 6.00 p.m. GMT)

When not locked down by a pandemic, Canadian Ken McGoogan is a globe-trotting, history-hunting storyteller who survived shipwreck off Dar es Salaam, chased the ghost of Jane Lady Franklin from Russell Square to Van Diemen's Land, and placed a John Rae memorial plaque in the High Arctic. Ken has published fifteen books, among them three that feature the peerless Rae: *Fatal Passage*, *Lady Franklin's Revenge*, and *Dead Reckoning*. He also wrote introductions to *The Arctic Journals of John Rae* and *John Rae's Arctic Correspondence, 1844-1855*.

In 1998, Ken landed a fellowship that took him to the University of Cambridge for three months. During this time he conceived *Fatal Passage*, which brought him to Orkney, gave rise to a string of Arctic books, prizes, and speaking engagements, and got him voyaging in the North-west Passage with Adventure Canada



Fatal Passage also inspired an award-winning, feature-length docudrama in which, with Orcadian historian Tom Muir, he makes a cameo appearance. On March 9, Ken will talk to the John Rae Society about the Indigenous Contribution to Arctic Exploration – a subject he explores thoroughly in *Dead Reckoning: The Untold Story of the Northwest Passage*.

*If you missed Martyn Obbard's talk on 16th January and don't want to wait until it becomes available on the website, contact secretary@johnraesociety.com. To book either of the other two please go to our website.

Membership

You will probably have noticed that the majority of our speakers are members of the John Rae Society or have very close affiliation to it. Some of the talks are the result of correspondence and we always value advice and information offered to us. This was the case with articles that have appeared in previous issues, such as *Polar Exploration* and *John Rae Commemorated on an Unusual Scale* (no.8), *Charles Dickens and John Rae* and *Memories of Goja Haven* (no.9), *From Erebus to Orkney* and *Where is Clestrain's Garden?* (no.10), *A dashing Young Frenchman* and *John Rae's Sculptor* (no.11) and *Marion Rae Hamilton: an interview* (no.12). All these newsletters are available on the website.

Others explain why they joined the Society. Here is a submission from member in the United States, Brady Brim-DeForest of Balvaird Castle.

I have a deep and abiding interest in polar explication and John Rae's work in northern Canada is of particular interest to me. As a life member of Royal Scottish Geographical Society, I have become involved in the study of early Scottish explorers, geographers, and cartographers, especially those who have in the past been overlooked. I am excited to support the work of the Society and look forward to a visit to the Hall of Clestrain in the future.

Overall Membership

<u>Membership Type</u>	<u>No.</u>	-	<u>Members by Area</u>	<u>No.</u>	-
Annual	111	27%	Orkney	123	30%
Corporate	7	2%	Scotland	107	26%
Honorary	11	3%	UK Other	117	28%
Life	160	39%	Overseas	65	16%
Patron	6	1%			
Standing Order	117	28%			
Total	412	100%	Total	412	100%

