

# Stories & Fables:

Reflections on culture development in Orkney



A report by François Matarasso  
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# Stories & Fables: Contents

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## Foreword

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This report describes the distinctive cultural life of Orkney today, looking back over the past generation to understand how it has come to be as strong, varied and rewarding as it now is. Highlands and Islands Enterprise's imaginative commission was to look for the long-term reasons for Orkney's success in culture so as to identify transferable lessons for other areas and communities. Given the complexity of any culture and its relationship with place, time, identity, values and everything that makes Kirkwall different to Stromness (to say nothing of Elgin, Tobermory or even Totnes), the results of the study could never be simple. I did not anticipate, however, that the research would be quite so rich, so interesting and ultimately so limitless.

What follows is the result of six months (on and off) reading, listening and thinking about the culture of 20,000 people who live on a small group of islands in the Northern seas. It is based on extensive research into published and unpublished sources, data sets and papers, which has been tested again and again in conversations with Orcadians (and others), and with the experience of being in Orkney. So rich are these multiple sources that I am principally conscious, on submitting this report, of its omissions and simplifications. There is so much more to represent than space allows and so much more to understand than time permits.

For that reason, I hope that Orcadians, who know what is depicted in these pages better than anyone, will be tolerant of absences in a report that is already very long. An account of life in a small community also faces a basic, human challenge: how to mention those who've been most involved. Some will be embarrassed to find their names linked here with Orkney's recent cultural achievements, particularly given Orcadians' disposition towards self-effacement. Some may wonder within why others or perhaps they themselves are not mentioned. What is true of individuals is also true of organisations, events and festivals.

I apologise to anyone who feels self-conscious or slighted in the following account. Without naming individuals, the story of Orkney's cultural life could not be told; equally, to give credit to everyone for all that has happened would turn this into a cross between an official history and the electoral roll. I trust they will understand that what follows is a sketch of the wood, not of every tree that has made it.

It is also inevitable that it will contain mistakes – unintended errors, rather than choices and judgements. An earlier draft was circulated to many of those I interviewed and many corrections have been made here: I shall be happy to correct any further faults that are drawn to my attention. Finally, my thanks to all those who contributed to the study; their names are recorded in the acknowledgements. I hope that their engagement is rewarded in what follows.

**François Matarasso**

**December 2011**

# 1 Summary

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## 1.1 APPROACHING ORKNEY

This study has been commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) with the aim of understanding how cultural life in the Orkney Islands has developed over the past 30 years. Recognising that Orkney has been particularly successful in this field, notably through the St Magnus International Festival, the Pier Arts Centre and the craft industries, HIE wished to see whether there were transferable lessons that other parts of the region might draw upon.

The study is unusual in two ways. First, because it tries to trace what has happened in a community's cultural life over a long period of time: the natural starting point – the late 1970s, when both the St Magnus Festival and the Pier Arts Centre were established – is a time when James Callaghan was Prime Minister. Secondly, it is unusual in its focus with why things happened in the ways that they did: in seeking explanations for the distinctive successes of Orcadian cultural development.

In doing this, the study uses an idea first suggested by Edwin Muir, one of several great writers born in Orkney. In calling his autobiography, *The Story and the Fable*, Muir made a distinction between observable, acknowledged facts and the complex, intangible human side of a person's or a society's life. The two are in constant interaction, influencing and being influenced by each other. Neither, alone, can give a complete or accurate understanding of human experience.

Muir's idea may be seen as another articulation of a recurring polarity: between science and art, between quantitative and qualitative research, between the conscious and unconscious mind, between analytic and existential philosophy and so on. It is characteristic that a writer and an Orcadian should cast this division in terms of alternative forms of narrative.

The report follows Muir in describing Orkney's recent cultural development in two separate ways. Part 2 is called *Stories: Making Orkney's culture*, and it aims to give a broadly objective account of the current state of the island's cultural life. Part 3, *Fables: Imagining Orkney's culture*, is much more subjective exploration of some of the factors that help explain that development.

Both parts are based on a research process involving documentary and data analysis and extensive conversations with people concerned with Orkney's cultural life. It will be evident, however, that the story draws more on the first research methods and the fable on the second.

The study concludes with two short sections that suggest areas for discussion among cultural managers and policy makers. Part 4, *Principles: Learning from Orkney's culture*, distils some of the lessons of Orkney's success into some organisational behaviours associated with effective cultural development. Part 5, *Futures: Sustaining Orkney's culture*, looks at Orkney again and suggests that how culture is managed in the next five years will be critical in sustaining its long term success.

## 1.2 STORIES | MAKING ORKNEY'S CULTURE

The evidence that Orkney is exceptionally successful in the quality, richness and variety of its cultural life is strong. In heritage, performing arts, visual arts and crafts and literature Orkney has assets of national and more than national importance. The St Magnus Festival and the Pier Arts Centre are well known and have already been mentioned, but they are the tip of a huge iceberg that includes Skara Brae, Orkney Museum, the County Archives, numerous other festivals, the jewellery and craft sectors, smaller galleries, orchestras, choirs, bands and many writers.

Orkney's cultural strength lies in a complex ecology that is enabled and required by an island community of just 20,000 people. Organisations are obliged to work together: the Folk Festival box office and shop are hosted by the Pier Arts Centre; the St Magnus Festival connects international stars with local choirs and schoolchildren. A person may be a committee member of one organisation, stage crew for another, an amateur actor in a third and an accomplished writer in her (rare) free time.

Very little of this has been planned by public bodies. Instead the Islands Council, the Scottish Arts Council (now Creative Scotland), Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other institutions have responded to the initiative of small groups of enthusiasts. On this basis, festivals, exhibitions, societies, events, even, exceptionally, heritage sites, have been established and matured. The creation in 2001 of Orkney Arts Forum has done much to strengthen this organic and community-driven development and the planning that it has coordinated will continue to be invaluable in making the most of the county's lively cultural scene.

The value of that scene, economically and socially, is immense. The two largest arts organisations alone turnover a million pounds a year between them, while crafts and jewellery are important employers. Archaeology, heritage and the arts – to say nothing of culture as a way of life – are among the most important attractors to Orkney's 140,000 visitors. No less important is the part culture plays in binding the community together, in building skills, experience and confidence and in creating the shared experiences and memories that are the stuff of identity.

Nothing in Orkney looks very big if it is compared with its equivalents in more populous parts of the country. But it is often very big for a population of 20,000 people: there can be few if any communities in the United Kingdom where so much is achieved in culture by so few. Culture is also bigger within Orkney than it sometimes appears. The numbers employed, the money generated, the people attending, are much smaller than in farming, energy or hospitality, but in a small community where every person plays multiple roles, each part has a disproportionate influence on the whole. It would be a grave error to underestimate the importance of culture to the success of Orkney as a whole in the past 30 years.

## 1.3 FABLES | IMAGINING ORKNEY'S CULTURE

Orkney's culture has developed in the ways that it has for reasons that are closely linked to its geography, history and more intangible ideas about itself. The obvious factors are associated with being an island community situated at a maritime crossroads, first in the Northern European seas and then on transatlantic routes. This has made Orkney a place of exchange and interaction, where people are constantly arriv-

ing and leaving. This interaction between local and outsider has characterised a great deal of the cultural development of the past 30 years, but it has depended on an openness that is not always found in remote rural or island communities.

Orkney's fertility made it a land of farmers, not crofters, who used agricultural surplus to trade and invest. Its people have the self-reliant culture of islanders used to sorting things out for themselves and each other: mutual assistance is the other side of this coin. Orcadians respect – expect, even – a degree of modesty and self-deprecation: they've little time for the showy or those who want to push themselves forward. These independent and egalitarians ideal have helped shape a culture in which people expect to work together for their own pleasures and the social good.

The idea of self-reliance is associated with a commitment to self-improvement and of high expectations of the next generation. In a place where – for all its relative prosperity – life has never been easy, parents are often especially keen to help their children towards a better life. That encouragement is one factor in Orkney's higher than average school attainment. What is less common is a tradition of encouraging young people's creativity and artistic skills, perhaps from the traditions of mutual entertainment that grew from long winter nights in the days before television and cars. Today, television opens new routes for artistic aspiration and cars allow parents to ferry their children to out of school arts activities and tuition.

These social and cultural values have shaped Orkney's cultural development not just for 30 years but for centuries. They have received a boost since the 1970s because of changes in British, Western and even global conditions. Increasing prosperity (until 2008), the growth of the consumer society, new digital technological, more leisure, social democratisation and better education have all played a part. So too has the decline of politics and religion as framing narratives in British society, which has contributed to the growing importance of culture as a source of values.

So if Orkney's recent cultural success has been of its own making, it has also benefited because its animators were rowing with the tide. And, while there are good reasons to believe that tide will not reverse itself yet, it may weaken and some of the resources it has brought with it may diminish. The French sometimes describe the 30 years of growth the country experienced after 1945 as 'Les Trente Glorieuses'. Orkney has also experienced 30 years that might come to be seen as glorious, not least in its cultural life. Building on that in the difficult times the country is now going through will be more difficult: it will not be less important.

## 1.4 PRINCIPLES | LEARNING FROM ORKNEY'S CULTURE

Orkney's success in culture is part of its wider success in sustaining a prosperous, attractive and secure community whose quality of life is widely admired. This idea may be substantiated across a range of indicators, from population growth to crime, from educational attainment to employment. The relationship between culture and these other aspects of life is always complex and symbiotic: but it is rarely closer than in Orkney. Cultural strength brings tourism, which sustains the local economy that in turn sustains cultural activity. Like all small and relatively self-contained communities, Orkney depends on the success of every aspect of local life: weakness in the economy or problems in education services would affect culture in the short

and long term. Likewise, a decline in local arts, heritage and other cultural assets would affect the economy and the work of schools and colleges.

This is true not just because of the close relationships between different actors and institutions in each area of local life. It is true also because the underlying conditions of success – from the physical reality of the islands in the world to the cooperative self-reliance of Orcadian people – operate as much in farming as in folk music. Success cannot be taken out of the Orkney Islands any more than the Orkney Islands can be taken out of its success.

This does not mean that what has been achieved in Orkney could not be achieved elsewhere. While Orkney is outstanding, it is not unique among Scotland's island or remote rural communities in developing a strong cultural sector over the past 30 years. Shetland and the Western Isles have, in their different ways, achieved a great deal, as have parts of the Highlands. But there are also areas with natural and cultural assets that have seemed to lag behind in this respect. It would be invidious and perhaps unfair to single out individual places, but anyone familiar with the Highlands and Islands will be aware of boroughs whose cultural life has little resonance beyond the immediate community. On that basis alone, the idea that there may be valuable lessons in Orkney's experience of cultural development is valid.

But what lessons can be drawn? If what has happened in Orkney is so embedded in its geography, history and people – its culture understood anthropologically – how can places with different conditions learn from such a particular experience?

The answer lies in looking at what has happened in Orkney, in the wider context of arts and cultural development practice, to identify *how* people have created a strong cultural life rather than focusing on *what* they have created. In other words, it is the way that cultural development is undertaken that matters rather than the forms that emerge as a result. Here, the study suggests a number of principles that are transferable to other communities and conditions. They are:

#### The Orkney Principles of cultural development

1 Leadership with a clear vision	6 Flexible and responsive
2 Demonstrating value	7 Confidence and humility
3 A sustainable economic model	8 Cooperative and competitive
4 Valuing volunteers	9 Always positive
5 Open, democratic governance	10 'Dig where you stand'

These principles describe a framework within which culture can flourish, especially within small and remote communities. But they are not a prescription or a guarantee. Their value lies in assisting reflection and empowering people to take action most appropriate to their own circumstances. One of the inescapable lessons of Orkney's cultural life, and not just in the past 30 years, is that individuals working together to fulfil their enthusiasms make creative, resilient and flexible artistic development. Public authorities and other institutions have a vital supportive role to play, but it is an enabling not a directing one. By providing sufficient and appropriate support, they can foster a strong, independent and diverse cultural ecology that plays a central role in every aspect of local life. Orkney shows what can be achieved, and how. It remains an example that other communities can learn from, if not imitate.



## 1.5 FUTURES | SUSTAINING ORKNEY'S CULTURE

The study shows that Orkney has achieved a remarkable level of success in the development of its cultural life. This has clear benefits to the local economy, to tourism, to education and to social life. Orkney without its festivals, galleries, studios, craft shops, community plays, concerts and stories would not be the place it is or the place that is so successful at attracting people, whether as visitors or residents. Orkney's exceptional success in increasing its population over the past 20 years is inseparable from its unique quality of life and culture makes a huge contribution to that.

However, this study coincides with a period of transition in Orkney's cultural groups, as many of the generation who drove development in the past 30 years come to retirement age. Some key figures have already retired from active involvement; others have died. There is a generation of talented and committed individuals ready to take over and that transition is already evident in some areas.

The job of the new leadership is difficult for two reasons. First, because they are now working in a mature landscape, they have less freedom of movement than their predecessors. Secondly, they are taking over in the worst financial crisis in living memory, with unpredictable consequences that may go far beyond economics.

Orkney's culture, whose strengths contribute so much of the community's vitality, is therefore more vulnerable than at any time in the past 20 years. No one should assume that what has happened in Orkney will continue to happen in future.

So what to do? The report suggests two areas for discussion within and beyond Orkney's cultural sector.

First, it argues that the hands off, *laissez-faire* approach that has served Orkney well in the past needs to be modified temporarily. The independent cultural institutions are likely to need more help than usual over the next five years but there will be no standard response. Some will just need encouragement and moral support, others will need to be given space and time to solve their problems, and still others may need financial help or management expertise. What matters is that the major institutions – Orkney Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Creative Scotland in particular – give attention to the changing needs and work together to support the sector through this period of transition, while protecting its independence. It is suggested that Orkney Arts Forum could take a key role in this process through the creation of a 10-year cultural strategy for Orkney linked to community planning.

Secondly, the report suggests that Orkney Islands Council, the cultural sector and other local stakeholders should explore the possibility and potential benefits of establishing an Orkney Cultural Foundation as a way to secure the long-term financial viability of the islands' cultural life. What is envisaged is a financial instrument not an arts development agency or a community trust, a mechanism that could hold resources as an endowment whose income would protect the small, innovative and risky aspects of cultural life in Orkney. Such a foundation could encourage cultural philanthropy at all levels and access resources that individual arts organisations would not have the capacity or profile to secure. This would be a new approach, but it might have the potential to secure the benefits Orkney derives from its culture in years to come.

## 2 Approaching Orkney

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### 2.1 ANOTHER STONE ON THE CAIRN

Robertson Davies, describing contemporary literary production, observed that ‘you can hardly throw a stone in the street without hitting somebody who has written a book’.<sup>1</sup> That certainly feels true in Orkney, with the rider that a stone flung along Albert Street in Kirkwall or Victoria Street in Stromness would be sure to hit an author who had written a book about Orkney. There can be few parts of the planet whose flora, history, myths, archaeology, birds, music, personalities and dreams have been as exhaustively documented in print as this. Even George Mackay Brown, who stares over a younger generation of island writers like an Easter Island statue, seemed daunted by the challenge in *An Orkney Tapestry*.

To write a new book on Orkney is no easy matter. Nearly every facet of life in the islands has been described and discussed and catalogued over and over again.

*George Mackay Brown, An Orkney Tapestry, 1969<sup>2</sup>*

Mackay Brown’s observation will be recognised by local writers, if somewhat ruefully, given what GMB himself added to the cairn of Orkney literature. How much more warily must an outsider, particularly one whose first hand-knowledge of Orkney is so recent, approach the task of providing an account of its culture.

And yet, in the everyday world of arts administration, plans must be made and money raised; even genius needs bed and breakfast, as those Orcadians know well who have put up performers at the St Magnus Festival over the years. It is important to know not just what culture contributes to social and economic life but also – and these questions are more rarely asked – how and why. With such knowledge, artists, managers, elected members and others can make better choices about future projects and programmes.

### 2.2 THE BRIEF

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the agency charged with developing the region’s economy, commissioned this study in spring 2011, to see what might be learned from Orkney’s success in developing a sustainable and diverse arts ecology. HIE’s brief gives a very positive picture of cultural development in the islands:

The culture and heritage of Orkney is unique and is evident in many aspects of island life. Music, arts and cultural groups thrive throughout the year in the islands, with many of these interests collaborating in the internationally recognised St Magnus Festival, a celebration of music and arts held every summer. Orkney also hosts the annual Orkney Folk Festival plus Jazz, Country, Blues, Science and a Beer Festival. Interest in drama, dance, music, the visual arts and new media, crafts and literature are well represented and over the years world-wide acclaim has come to many talented performers, writers, artists and musicians who have either been lifelong residents or those who have made Orkney their home. In Stromness, the Pier Arts Centre, newly refurbished and

expanded in 2007, houses one of Britain's finest collections of 20th century paintings and sculpture. The cultural environment in Orkney has fostered the concentration of many craft skills – in jewellery, pottery, ceramics and textiles, traditional furniture, paintings and tapestries.<sup>3</sup>

It goes on to identify three distinctive aspects to Orkney's cultural situation:

- The percentage of employment in the crafts and arts, especially in large businesses;
- The extent to which Orkney is promoted internationally through its arts and crafts;
- The central influence of two international standard arts organisations (Pier Arts Centre and St Magnus Festival) for over a generation within one island community.<sup>4</sup>

HIE's brief asks how Orkney's culture has developed in the past generation and what factors have influenced that growth. It asks implicitly how well founded is the widely held view, expressed in the brief, that Orkney is culturally exceptional. Finally it asks what, if anything, in Orkney's cultural experience may be reproducible in other similar parts of the HIE region, or indeed in comparable places elsewhere.

### 2.3 WHAT, HOW AND WHY

What has happened is a fairly straightforward story, and one more or less familiar to those involved, or who have observed Orkney's cultural life from a distance. How and why it happened are more complex questions that touch on history, social norms, identity, beliefs and other subjective ideas that make up what Edwin Muir called the Fable – 'the vision by which people live'. Subjective this may be, but Orkney's recent cultural achievements cannot be understood, or replicated, without reference to it.

The problem, of course, is that Orkney's cultural achievements cannot be replicated, because they are the outcomes of its unique experience. The St Magnus Festival, Ola Gorie jewellery and the Pier Arts Centre, to take three instances mentioned by HIE, have flourished because of specific local conditions. Imitation of the *forms* of this success – for instance, by establishing a classical music festival in Argyll or Shetland – would be most unlikely to succeed. Like transplanting a rare tree with no thought of its native climate or soil, the result would be only expense and disappointment. If there are lessons to be learnt from Orkney's cultural achievements – and there surely are – they touch on the *conditions* that have produced those achievements, not the *forms* that they have taken.

### 2.4 UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

Research for the study involved interviews, open discussions, site visits, documentary and data analysis. Given the 30-year horizon, the volume of written material and other data of potential relevance was vast and included:

- Statistical data on the demographic, social and economic trends of Orkney;
- Data on the cultural and creative sectors, the creative economy and tourism;
- Past research reports and evaluations undertaken for funding bodies;
- Data about the major actors including Pier Arts Centre and St Magnus Festival.

Its availability, accessibility and compatibility, as well as the obvious time constraints, have all influenced the actual value of this data in this report. While there is

certainly interesting, and probably important, data that was not used in the research, there was still ample for the account of Orkney's culture today set out in the next section, entitled '*Stories: Orkney's culture today*'.

Two visits to Orkney were also made, to meet people involved and experience at first hand the cultural and tourism offer and the particularities of living and working in Orkney. The first of these, between 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011 coincided with the last days of the St Magnus Festival. In addition to a series of interviews, it provided an opportunity to attend five Festival and MagFest events, and to talk informally with audience members at concerts and on bus journeys to Deerness and Sandwick.

Following this, a discussion paper was produced to share some preliminary ideas. This included 12 questions to which responses were invited and a preliminary timeline of key moments in Orkney's recent cultural history. The paper was circulated widely before the public meetings (see below). Some written responses to it were received, especially on the timeline, but it was not formally discussed at the meetings, at which those present shaped the conversation according to their interests.

These meetings took place during a second visit between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2011. They were advertised in *The Orcadian* and publicised on BBC Radio Orkney (which gave an insight into the reach of that particular cultural medium). The meetings drew a cross-section of Orkney's people. While there most naturally had a professional or amateur interest in the arts, others had none beyond living in Orkney. The turnout on Shapinsay can be put down to the optimistic time (9.30 on a Friday morning) itself dictated by ferry timetables and other commitments.

Date	Time	Venue	Attendance
Thursday 25 August	17.00	Orkney Library, Kirkwall	5
Friday 26 August	9.30	Shapinsay Community Centre	1
Saturday 27 August	10.30	Gable End Theatre, Hoy	7
Monday 29 August	19.00	Belsair Guest House, Sanday	8
Tuesday 30 August	14.00	Pier Arts Centre, Stromness	8
Tuesday 30 August	19.00	Pier Arts Centre	12
Wednesday 31 August	16.00	Haff Yok Café, Pierowall, Westray	6
Thursday 1 September	19.00	Cromarty Hall, St Margaret's Hope	7

**Table 1: Public meetings held to discuss Orkney's culture in Summer 2011**

Each meeting lasted about two hours and, like the interviews, was recorded. All these conversations were thoughtful and illuminating: people were very generous with their time and open with their experiences and views. The one exception to this rule was the commercial craft and jewellery sector, which proved difficult to engage: requests for meetings or responses to the discussion paper often went unanswered. It may be that some businesses saw less relevance in the study at a time of economic stress: certainly, it would be a mistake to think that the questions addressed in this study concern the whole cultural sector equally. Whatever the reason, the low participation inevitably weakens this report's treatment of the more industrial end of the craft sector. The gap is the more striking because it contrasts with what was, in my experience, a genuinely exceptional degree of engagement in the study by Orkney people with an interest in culture.

## 2.5 THE REPORT

This report, then, results from the interplay of documentary evidence and conversations with many of those who have shaped Orkney's recent cultural development. Published evidence and statistical data is tested against human experience and perception – and vice versa. There is not always an easy agreement between the two ways of knowing but the tension can be as illuminating as the areas of correspondence, and both are reflected in the structure of this report.

- **Part 2, Stories**, is a broad outline of Orkney's current cultural life, focusing on the principal organisations, festivals and activities and tracing, as far as knowledge and space allows, the sector's development since the 1970s.
- **Part 3, Fables**, looks for the main reasons that explain why culture has developed in Orkney as it has, drawing largely on discussions with those directly involved, with audience members, representatives of public bodies and others.
- **Part 4, Principles**, draws on Orkney's experience to suggest strategies that might be most effective in areas with similar, but not identical, characteristics.
- **Part 5, Futures**, concludes by suggesting that Orkney is at a turning point in its cultural life and argues that its sustainability will depend on careful and sensitive management on the part of a wide range of actors over the next five to ten years.

Since the report makes extensive use of quotations, its typographical conventions should be explained.

Material quoted from published sources is in small sans-serif type, like this, with numbered end-notes referring to the original source.

*'All quotes in italics and with quotation marks are taken from meetings, from interviews with individuals, or from written comments received by email.'*

People's words reproduced have been anonymised because their importance here lies in the ideas being expressed, not in who is expressing them; they are not therefore referenced, but all are sourced from conversations undertaken during this study. Photographs were taken during the study, or have been provided by Orkney organisations; the latter have been credited wherever possible.

The report's title, adapted from Edwin Muir, is intended to suggest several things. It implies that human culture is a narrative – created, told, shared, contested, but always a narrative, despite different forms and philosophies, ideologies or values. Muir's idea of the distinction between a factual story and a mythical fable is itself a narrative reflecting a philosophy. Muir was a modernist; in today's postmodern, unstable world, it feels right to speak of stories and fables in the plural. One doesn't need to speak to many Orcadians to appreciate the plurality of their views.

So stories and fables it is. And it is not – and could not be – all the stories or every fable about Orkney's cultural life since the 1970s. It is an interpretation, not a definitive assessment and its principal value may be in giving Orcadians (and Scots) an outside view of cultural development in the county against which to test their own interpretations. Others see us differently than we see ourselves: not necessarily better. The truth may lie in the bringing together of different perspectives, in uniting stories *and* fables.

### 3 Stories: Making Orkney's culture

The facts of our history – what Edwin Muir called The Story – are there to read and study.

George Mackay Brown, *An Orkney Tapestry*, 1969<sup>5</sup>

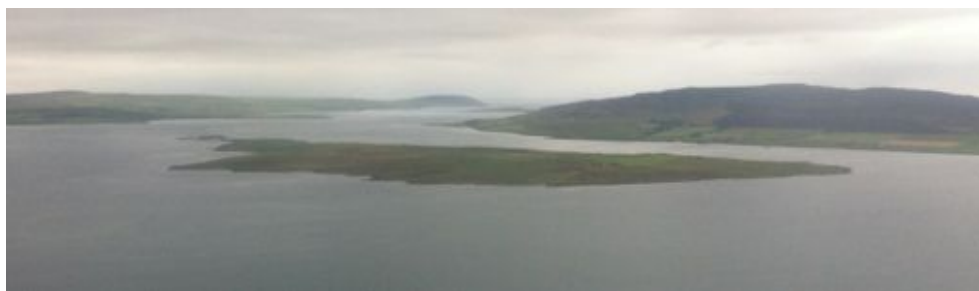
#### 3.1 FIGURING ORKNEY

Before turning to Orkney's cultural life, it may be helpful to begin with a snapshot of the county for those less familiar with it than its residents; Orcadians may prefer to skip the following summary.





### 3.1.1 'Like sleeping whales'



Orkney is an archipelago of about 40 islands, of which 16 or 17 are currently inhabited (according to who you ask).<sup>6</sup> The land is mostly low-lying: although Hoy has dramatic cliffs and attains 479 metres at Ward Hill, only six other islands reach above 100 metres. The Orkney Islands lie 10 miles off the north east coast of Scotland, from which they are separated by some of the most powerful seas in the world. They have a mild climate, relative to the northern latitude, with average annual temperatures of 8°C; less surprisingly, Orkney can be wet and windy.

### 3.1.2 Population

Orkney's population is 20,110, a rise of 4.6% over the past decade.<sup>7</sup> This growth is a first sign that something may be different here: it is higher than the national growth rate (3.1% for Scotland as a whole over the same period) and, more significantly, higher than the rates for Scotland's two other principal island groups, Shetland (2%) and the Western Isles, whose population has fallen by just under 1% since 2001.<sup>8</sup> The long-term trend, over the last 40 years, is even more striking. Between 1981 and 2010, Scotland's population grew by 3.7%, while the population of the Western Isles fell by 14.7% and that of Shetland by 1.6%. Orkney, with a population increase of 9.1% over the same period, not only experienced growth very different from other islands, but well above the national average.

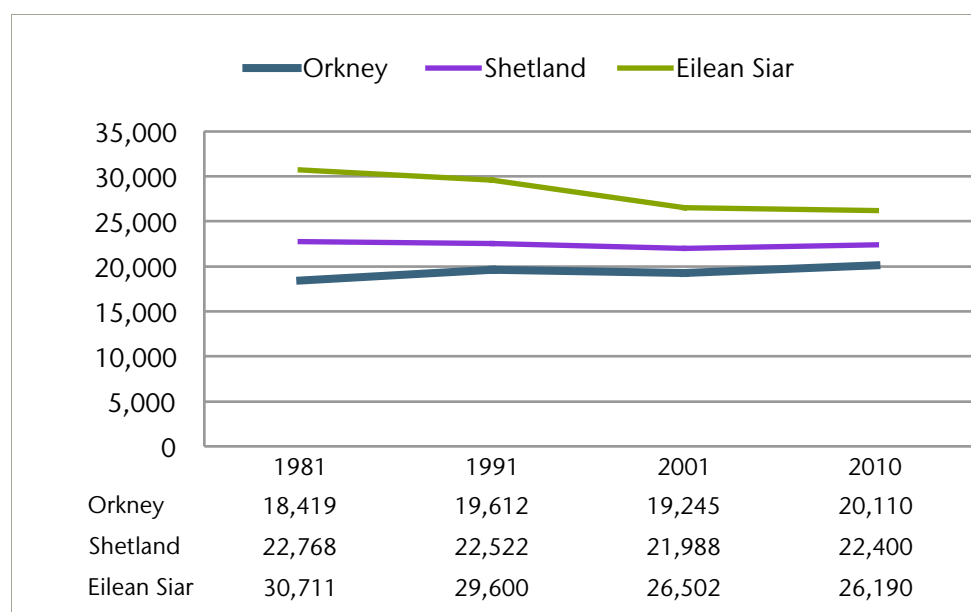


Chart 1: Population change in Scottish Island Groups, 1981-2010<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1.3 Migration

*'I did have a strong feeling, within about four days, that I wanted to be connected here for the rest of my life: it's that combination of sea, land, sky and the culture of interesting people.'*

Since the mid 1990s, this population growth has been produced by in-migration, as deaths exceed births among existing residents. Between 2001 and 2008, Orkney experienced net in-migration in every age group, except among people aged 16 to 29, a time when people often leave to pursue their education and early stage careers.<sup>10</sup> Orkney's ability to attract new people has thus been a determinant aspect of its recent history, and one that has shaped and been shaped by cultural questions.

The county's existing cultural strengths have attracted artists and other creative people who have in turn developed Orkney's culture in moving to the islands. People have moved from Scotland, from the rest of the British Isles, from other EU countries and from further afield. One consequence – which will be considered more fully later – is that Orkney is among those parts of Scotland with the highest proportion of inhabitants born outside the country: ninth among 32 local authority areas:

Rank	Local council area	Percentage of residents born in Scotland
1	Edinburgh	77.8%
6	Highland	82.2%
9	Orkney	83.4%
12	Shetland	85.4%
18	Glasgow City	89.1%
20	Eilean Siar	89.5%
32	North Lanarkshire	95.3%

**Table 2: Proportion of population born in Scotland, by area**

(Source 2001 Census)<sup>11</sup>

Another demographic trend is worth noting in the context of migration: change within the county itself. The Mainland, which is now home to about 80% of Orkney residents, exerts a growing attraction, so that the population is today more concentrated, especially in Kirkwall, than in previous centuries. House prices in Kirkwall and Stromness have risen substantially over the same period, so that – unusually in the UK – property in the countryside, and especially the isles, is cheaper than in town.<sup>12</sup> In its own, quiet way, Orkney is becoming more urbanised.



Westray



### 3.1.4 Employment

In December 2010, Orkney's unemployment level was 1.4%, well below the Scottish average of 4.0%, a good indicator of the archipelago's relative economic prosperity.<sup>13</sup> It is also notable – particularly given Orkney's ageing population<sup>14</sup> – that Orcadians are more economically active (86% compared to the national average of under 77%<sup>15</sup>) and more likely to be self-employed (12%, compared to 7.5% for Scotland as a whole<sup>16</sup>). The arts, crafts and creative industries account for a proportion of these, and this aspect is discussed further below. Of course, one must be careful about what conclusions can be built on small numbers. Statistics tend to be unsteady in places with relatively few people. For example, at 2.3%, the island of Sanday has the highest unemployment rate in Orkney, but if three of those people found work, the local jobless rate would almost halve.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.5 Economy



Although, like other small and remote communities, Orkney is economically reliant on services, public administration and transport, the strength of its construction sector is significant in itself and as an indicator of wider growth.<sup>18</sup> Oil and gas production, which have been very valuable in the past are now declining, but the introduction of renewable energy is bringing new, if sometimes contested, opportunities.<sup>19</sup> Several island development trusts have built their own wind turbines to support their work.

Fishing does not occupy the place it once did. Although there are still some 330 people employed regularly or partially in the industry, only 6 trawlers were registered in the islands in 2008 with the rest of the fleet concerned with shellfish.<sup>20</sup> Live-stock farming remains a cornerstone of economic and social life, despite a gradual decline in the land used for agriculture and in the numbers of cattle and sheep.<sup>21</sup> Even so, almost 2,000 people work in farming, full or part time. Milk production continues to increase and is mostly dedicated to the production of Orkney cheese.

The islands have some of Scotland's finest farmland. Crops are grown and livestock reared pretty much as they always have been, under the watchful eye of that very canny character, the Orcadian farmer.

*Food and Drink, VisitOrkney Website<sup>22</sup>*

Local food, notably meat and fish, is important to the economy, to the visitor offer and increasingly to the islands' image and identity. For example, whisky produced at Highland Park and Scapa distilleries and beer at Quoyloo and Swannay breweries are strongly branded as Orkney products, while the tourist marketing makes much of Orkney's food.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.1.6 Tourism



The Broch of Gurness

'I expect tourists came then from the South?'  
'They did indeed. Left enchanted,  
wrote books about it.'

Andrew Greig, 'In the last village' (1993)<sup>24</sup>

Tourism is key to the Orkney economy. In 2009 there were about 142,000 visitors, not including 45,000 cruise ship visitors, or about seven tourists for each resident.<sup>25</sup> Four out of five visitors were from the UK, with almost half coming from other parts of Scotland.<sup>26</sup> Despite global economic problems, Orkney has seen visitor numbers grow by 18% between 2005 and 2009.<sup>27</sup> Visitors are estimated to have spent £31.8 million<sup>28</sup> including £3.7 million on locally produced food, drink and souvenirs, of which a substantial proportion may be assumed to have gone into Orkney-made jewellery, textiles, other crafts and artwork.<sup>29</sup>

A high proportion of visitors have a professional occupational background: 38% were from social groups A and B in 2009.<sup>30</sup> This may be partly a factor of the relatively high cost of holidaying in Orkney, particularly for travel, but the type of Orkney's tourism offer should not be underestimated. With a strong emphasis on nature, archaeology, history and culture, the county is bound to attract another kind of visitor to those who prefer the seaside or city breaks.

Orkney attracts visitors principally because of what it is (a remote and relatively unchanged group of islands) and how that has shaped its way of life (historically and today). The most significant *cultural* reason for coming, according to respondents to the 2009 Visitor Survey, was to see prehistoric sites and archaeology.

Principal reason given by holidaymaker	Percentage of respondents
General Interest / Holiday / Just Visiting	28%
Prehistoric Sites / Archaeology	14%
Revisiting	10%
Sights / Landscape / Remoteness	8%
People / History / Island Life	6%

**Table 2: Inspiration to Visit Holiday Visitors Top 5%**

(Source: 2009 Visitor Survey<sup>31</sup>)

This was underlined by the fact that more than half of all holidaymakers surveyed had visited St Magnus Cathedral (62%), Skara Brae (57%) and the Italian Chapel (56%).<sup>32</sup> The numbers involved are substantial: over 130,000 visitors to the cathedral and almost 70,000 at Skara Brae, although, in the case of the cathedral especially, these figures will include residents. In fact, Skara Brae and Maes Howe are now so popular that site conservation and ensuring that people have a rewarding visit are real issues.

In the present context, it is striking that contemporary culture, such as the arts, crafts or festivals were rarely mentioned by respondents to this survey as being a major factor in their visit. However, that may be a matter of perception, since 34% said they had shopped for crafts and local products and 27% had done photography or painting during their holiday.<sup>33</sup>

It is also a matter of scale. Research commissioned by Orkney Folk Festival in 2007 estimated that at least 400 people visited Orkney solely to attend the event.<sup>34</sup> This is not a statistically large proportion of Orkney's 142,000 annual visitors, but it makes a real difference to B&B owners, restaurateurs and publicans in Stromness.

Finally, the contribution of festivals to annual visitor numbers can be difficult to capture since they are short periods of intense activity: a visitor survey taken in July will meet no one who has come to the St Magnus Festival, whereas if the survey were taken the previous month it would show a disproportionately high number of classical music enthusiasts. The truth may be that, while a decision to come to Orkney is sparked by an interest in prehistory or ornithology, it is the range of experiences that ensure visitors enjoy their time and are keen to return. As one interviewee put it:

*'It's everything in miniature: you can watch birds in the morning, have a fine lunch of local produce, visit craft shops in the afternoon or a site, and hear a concert at night.'*

It is worth noting here two aspects of tourism that concerned some interviewees. The cruise ships were widely seen as taking far more than they gave - a kind of mass tourism of no lasting value to Orkney. There was also concern that some of the islands benefited far less from tourism than did the Mainland. Neither of these issues will surprise Orcadians, but they are reported because, however tricky they may be to solve in their different ways, they remain real concerns for many.



The Brough of Birsay

### 3.2 HERITAGE, MUSEUMS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

As to the attractions for visitors, the saying is 'Shetland for scenery, Orkney for antiquities' – and one might add 'either for angling'.

Ward Lock Tourist Guide to Scotland, 1930s<sup>35</sup>

#### Prehistory

Orkney is an ancient land, with traces of human settlement stretching back 10,000 years, including sites on UNESCO's World Heritage list.<sup>36</sup> This archaeological heritage, with internationally known sites such as Skara Brae, Maes Howe and the Ring of Brodgar, is one of the islands' major cultural assets, providing some of the striking imagery used to market Orkney. Given its distance from centres of population, it is extraordinary that Skara Brae is Historic Scotland's 4<sup>th</sup> most visited site, after the castles of Edinburgh, Stirling and Urquhart (on Loch Ness).<sup>37</sup>

Although historic culture is not mentioned in HIE's brief, it merits attention for several reasons. First, as already noted, it is a crucial cultural resource in attracting people to Orkney – and not just tourists, but people who choose to settle there, including a number of artists.

*'I knew something of the archaeology here [and] I began to use specific sites as a kind of metaphor for what I thought I was trying to do in painting, that is trying to get below the surface of what I was looking at and trying to understand the landscape.'*



dig-sound: Sound Recording, Ness of Brodgar Archaeological Excavations (Photo: Clare Gee), August 2011

As a result, they have inspired artists of all kinds. That is obvious in the work of makers such as Ola Gorie, Leila Thomson or Steven Cooper, but it may also be found in the work of contemporary artists like Rik Hammond, artist in residence at the Orkney World Heritage Site in the summer of 2011. The best of this work, whatever its market orientation, is neither merely illustrative nor exploitative. Rather, it creates a complex dialogue with the sites, making them a living part of present day Orkney (as they are) rather than silent traces of dead cultures.

#### History

Orkney's archaeology is so rich that it sometimes overshadows other parts of the islands' heritage, much as its great artists can dominate the contemporary culture.

But part of the county's strength is the variety of its heritage, which represents so many ages in its history: the Iron Age Broch at Gurness, the Viking settlement at Birsay, mediaeval castles on Westray and Wyre, renaissance palaces at Kirkwall, the cathedral, churches and kirks, Laird's mansions, industrial and military remains and more. This legacy's richness is reflected in the fact that Historic Scotland safeguards 33 properties in Orkney, compared to 8 in Shetland, 6 in the Western Isles and 55 across the vast North and Grampian Region.<sup>38</sup> Many of these assets are outstanding in their own right, and would be better known if they were more easily accessible. As a whole, however, they tell stories from every period of Orkney's remarkable history.

The Islands Council owns some important buildings, notably Tankerness House, now the County Museum, which tells Orkney's story, from the Stone Age to today; the museum's archaeology collection is recognised as being of national significance. More unusually, it also has custody of St Magnus Cathedral, 'in trust for the behoof of the Community and Nation', an arrangement which has placed this beautiful building at the heart of Orkney's social life, which it serves as a kind of symbolic hall.<sup>39</sup> Without such a building, it is difficult to imagine that St Magnus Festival could have achieved its present standards or scale.

The small town of Stromness has two accredited museums. The Pier Arts Centre has a Recognised Collection of National Significance; it is discussed at greater length in section 3.4.2 below. At the other end of Victoria Street is its older cousin, Stromness Museum.



Part of the record of the founding soirée at Stromness Museum

This was founded in 1837, decades before most British cities had public museum, in another instance of Orcadian farsightedness and communitarianism. It has been in its present building since 1860, and houses an exceptional collection of natural history and ethnography, with important collections relating to Orkney explorers such as John Rae, maritime and trading history and the military presence during and between the two world wars. Run by an independent trust, Orkney Natural History Society Museum Trust, it receives about 8,000 visitors a year; (exhibitions on George Mackay Brown and Cameron Stout have increased numbers by 25%). Apart from an annual grant (£7,500 in 2010/11, £6,750 in 2011/12) from Orkney Islands Council, the museum depends on ticket sales, shop receipts and local fundraising.

Stromness Museum is a recognised jewel. At Lyness, in Hoy, are some of Orkney's less appreciated heritage assets: the remains of one of the Royal Navy's most



important 20<sup>th</sup> century bases. A major museum and visitor centre has been established in a former pump house and oil tank: this attracted 11,500 visitors in 2010/11. But traces of the navy's passage are scattered across several square miles of Hoy, many of them now decayed. Given its role in both World Wars and the tens of thousands of people who once lived here, the island's sites have great potential for development. The needs of wartime heritage sites were raised in the public consultation around Orkney's Community Plan.<sup>40</sup>

The old pumping station at Lyness has been converted into a visitor centre, a sure sign of the new archaeological respectability of these not so ancient remains.

Caroline Wickham-Jones, *Orkney, A Historical Guide*, 2011<sup>41</sup>



The Scaapa Flow Visitor Centre and Museum

It is also important to note the many community, independent and private heritage sites open to visitors across the Orkney Islands. They include major properties such as Balfour Castle (Shapinsay), Skaill House (Sandwick) and Melsetter House (Hoy); military locations such as the Martello tower in Hoy and the Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm; prehistoric sites like the Tomb of the Eagles in South Ronaldsay; and the heritage centres, such as those on Shapinsay and Westray that have been created by local people.

Alongside these is Orkney's long tradition of creating cultural organisations, such as Orkney Arts Society and Orkney Craft Association, and putting on special events.

The continuity is highlighted by the name Linklater among the cast members of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century opera production in Stromness, the 1937 St Magnus Cathedral Octocentenary Pageant and the 2011 community production of *The Tempest*.<sup>42</sup> Orcadians have been organising to delight and entertain one another for a very, very long time.

In Orkney you cannot separate the landscape, the archaeological sites or the buildings from the arts; they are all part of the experience.

Cameron Taylor, Orkney Tourist Board, 1995<sup>43</sup>

### 3.3 FESTIVALS AND PERFORMING ARTS

MURTON 'So in a sense there was – and there presumably still is – quite a strong and vibrant artistic community of various kinds here in Orkney.'

CANT 'Oh yeah; festivals are a great way of pulling folk in. if you look at the calendar, Orkney has just festivals that go non-stop of various kinds.'

MURTON 'The summer festivals have turned Kirkwall into the music capital of the North. But all this is a diversion from my original quest for perfect isolation...'

Paul Murton, *In Search of Perfect Isolation*, BBC Scotland 2010<sup>44</sup>

### 3.3.1 St Magnus International Festival<sup>45</sup>

The St Magnus Festival ('International' was added in 2011) was founded in 1977 by a small group of local people and incomers. Among the first were Norman Mitchell, co-director from 1977-1979, and Archie Bevan, while the second included Peter Maxwell Davies<sup>46</sup>, a young English composer living on Hoy, and his then management team Judy and Michael Arnold. The involvement of George Mackay Brown, librettist of the Maxwell Davies opera, *The Martyrdom of St Magnus*, that opened the first festival, was more symbolic than practical, but still crucial. Poet and composer, islander and incomer, are built into the footings of the St Magnus Festival like the bones of saints in the foundations of a cathedral.

Today, when the week-long festival is internationally admired and has its own edgy fringe, half million pound turnover and 14,000 ticket sales, it takes effort to imagine what a risky, maverick proposition it was to create a contemporary classical music event in mid-Seventies Orkney.

In 1976, the Arts Council of Great Britain still sponsored the Scottish Arts Council, and had a budget of less than £29 million (about £160 million in today's terms).<sup>47</sup> There were three television channels and arts coverage was limited to a few reviews in the broadsheets and the specialist press. There was no Department of Culture, no Scottish Government, no European Capital of Culture, and very little political interest in the arts at all. To launch a festival at a time when contemporary classical music was unpopular and sometimes controversial, in a place with no existing facilities or audience was an extraordinary act of faith. But faith in what, exactly?

To judge by the recollections of some of those most involved, perhaps it was simply faith in the people of Orkney: that they deserved and would value the highest achievable musical experiences. That faith has proved well founded, though Orcadians are not to be taken for granted: the Festival had some vocal opponents in the early years.<sup>48</sup>

*'It was a rocky start because the community took it ill. They felt that it was an imposition – that it wasn't somehow natural – so there was a conscious decision to try and broaden the committee and bring some sense of ownership to Orkney.'*

In fact, the Festival had a strong community dimension from the start, and that was central to its gradual acceptance. Children and local musicians were involved in



2010 Festival (Orkney Media Group)

performing some of Peter Maxwell Davies's new compositions, while volunteers were essential to everything from fundraising to putting out chairs. Many also acted as hosts for visiting musicians, in the days when stars were more willing to stay in someone's guest room than they are today.



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the St Magnus Festival Choir at Pickaquoy Centre, June 2011 (Orkney Media Group)

And there were stars, drawn to Orkney by friendship for the composer, the Festival's growing reputation and the unique experience offered by the islands: Vladimir Ashkenazy, André Previn, Julian Bream, Evelyn Glennie, Joanna MacGregor – the list of exceptional performers is long and growing. Because the presence of such performers in Orkney has become so normal, it is worth observing that the St Magnus Festival has attracted internationally recognised artists in greater numbers and more frequently than could possibly be expected by such a small and out of the way community. To take an example outside the Festival's core business of music, the poets who have read at the Festival include John Burnside, Iain Crichton Smith, Douglas Dunn, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Jackie Kay, Liz Lochhead, Norman MacCaig, Edwin Morgan and Vikram Seth: several have done so more than once.

Everyday glamour is a defining characteristic of the St Magnus Festival. It brings artists of international stature to St Ninian's Kirk in Deerness or Sanday Community School. Performers and audience stand in St Peter's Kirkyard after a concert, sipping hot tea and enjoying the cakes provided by the Sandwich Branch of the SWRI from the back of a spotless horse trailer. It's not easy to be self-important in Orkney, when you're sharing facilities with everyone else. Audience members, stage crew, volunteers – all value the informal and friendly character of the Festival that makes it possible to meet performers who would be kept at a distance elsewhere. And because Orkney people don't push themselves forward, it is an equally pleasant experience for performers to be able to mingle like everyone else.

*'What fun, what fun, just working with an orchestra, being there for rehearsals, helping to set them up and get to know them, it's a privilege. You meet them in the Festival club after and speak to them.'*

The relationship between the Festival and the community is mutual. While people recognise and value what it has brought, they're also aware that there are Festival activities that are enabled by the musical and other resources of Orkney:



*'I do think it works both ways – they love to come here because they meet people. Some of the things that go on here give the folk in the Festival opportunities too.'*

The Festival treads a fine line in meeting the expectations of both locals and visitors. As so often in Orkney, it is this interaction that gives the Festival its character, adding greatly to the enjoyment of both groups. But it cannot always satisfy everyone. There is a fairly common view that patrons and supporters get privileged access to tickets, something that rankles the Orcadian sense of equality. At the same time, people recognise that those who are travelling to Orkney for the occasion need to be sure that they will be able to attend concerts. The system is also an important source of revenue: income from friends, patrons and benefactors, of whom there are currently more than 300 individuals, contributes about 4% of the Festival's income.<sup>49</sup>

Another tension is between the Mainland and the other isles. The Festival cannot escape this fact of Orkney life. It programmes concerts on the islands each year, but for practical and financial reasons, these are fewer and smaller than most people, including the Festival management, would wish. Still, some are untouched by the Festival: even among those interested enough to come to the open meetings, there were Orcadians and long-term residents who had never attended any Festival event. Among inhabitants of the northern isles, who face large costs attending any evening event on the Mainland, the sense of detachment is understandably greater.

In 1986, Peter Maxwell Davies invited Glenys Hughes, a Kirkwall musician and teacher, to join him as co-director and she took increasing responsibility in subsequent years, becoming sole artistic director from 1994 and directing the Festival until her retirement in 2010.<sup>50</sup> The composer Alasdair Nicolson became artistic director. He had been commissioned by the Festival and co-directed the St Magnus Composers' Course since its inception in 2007. However, it was the first time that the artistic director did not live in Orkney. The appointment of Tanya McGill as manager not only addressed the need to have an Orkney resident involved but allowed the Festival to adopt the usual approach of separating artistic and administrative leadership.



St Magnus International Festival Audience, 2011

The Festival's steady professionalisation – in its business, not its artistic, life, which has always been of the highest professionalism – has been necessary as it has grown in scale and ambition. In the past five years, ticket sales have averaged just under 14,000 and many events are sold out fast: indeed the difficulty of getting tickets for some concerts is a local grumble. Most venues on Orkney are small: only the cathedral and the Pickaquoy Centre can accommodate large numbers and each has challenges as an arts venue, though St Magnus Cathedral is widely loved for its acoustics and architectural beauty. Some people dream of a purpose-built perfor-

mance venue in Orkney, along the lines of Mareel in Shetland; for others, this as just the sort of trap that Orkney should avoid. The shared school and community theatre now being built at Kirkwall Grammar School is a very Orcadian solution.

The business has also grown hugely from its early days. Over the past six years, the St Magnus Festival has achieved an average annual income of about £475,000, of which less than half has been in the form of grant aid.<sup>51</sup> The festival's principal public sector supporters have been the Scottish Arts Council (now Creative Scotland) and Orkney Islands Council. In 2009, the Creative Scotland grant was increased significantly, to £145,000 (up 53% on the previous year); in 2011, it rose again to £165,000. However, the same year Orkney Islands Council reduced its annual grant from £77,000 to £62,000 as part of a rebalancing of all its arts spending.<sup>52</sup> In 2010, the last year for which accounts have been finalised, grant aid made up about 57% of the Festival's turnover, with over 23.5% coming from earned income and the rest coming from donations, sponsorship and individual supporters.

Comparisons between arts organisations are difficult to make and unreliable when they are made, because each has a unique history and situation. However, it is worth looking at another contemporary music festival established at about the same time as the St Magnus Festival just as a benchmarking exercise. Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (HCMF) is an annual event that takes place over 10 days in November. Its programme and reputation are in many ways comparable to that of the St Magnus Festival. It attracts attendances of 'up to 10,000 each year, of which well over half come from within one hour's drive of Huddersfield'.<sup>53</sup> In 2010 HCMF had income of about £515,000, which included grants of almost £265,000 from Arts Council England and £78,000 from Kirklees Council, among other grants; box office income was about £36,000. The table below shows the proportion of income of both festivals and highlights the Orkney event's lesser reliance on public funds.

	St Magnus Festival	Huddersfield Festival
Earned Income	23.5%	8.9%
Public Revenue Support	57.4%	88.0%
Sponsorship	5.3%	1.2%
Donations	13.7%	1.6%
Other Income	0.2%	0.3%

**Table 3: Income of SMIF and HCMF in 2010**

(Source: Organisational annual accounts<sup>54</sup>)

The comparison shows how much the St Magnus International Festival achieves with its comparatively low level of grant aid, especially given the huge transport costs arising from its location. How is that done? Like so much in Orkney, it is made possible by a large body of volunteers, including stage crew, ushers, accommodation hosts and many more. Without these people, the Festival simply would not happen. Even so, the small staff team is overstretched.<sup>55</sup>

This is the central paradox in all of Orkney's cultural development: it depends on goodwill yet goodwill cannot be depended on – or rather, it should not be taken for granted. Local people's support, moral and practical, is a cornerstone of the St Magnus Festival, not just enabling it to take place, but also giving it its unique character.

That support is generously given, for the good of the community, but it can always be withdrawn. An army of volunteers is not like a conscript army: it is more powerful, but only when the values that motivate it are respected. If one of the distinctive conditions of Orkney's cultural life is the extent to which it is self-generated and fuelled by unpaid work, then there are important implications for professionals and the public bodies who have an interest in its continuing strength.



Johnsmas Foy SMF 2010

### 3.3.2 Other festivals

Stromness Shopping Week is a time when the community all pulls together to ensure a good time is had by all.

Stromness Shopping Week Website<sup>56</sup>

The St Magnus International Festival stands in Orkney's cultural landscape much as its inspirer does among British composers, but cultures have breadth and width, not just heights. Orkney is endowed with a wealth of festivals and events throughout the year, though wintertime activities are naturally smaller and more community focused, while the summer ones are geared to attract tourists and visitors as well as locals. The following is a far from complete list of festivals and other broadly cultural events that took place in the summer months of 2011, over more than one day.

Month	Events in 2011
April	Orkney Ceilidh weekend Orkney Book Festival Orkney Jazz Festival Sanday Soulka (Folk & Folklore)
May	Orkney Folk Festival Sanday Soulka (Stones and Bones)
June	St Magnus International Festival Orkney Wine Festival Sanday Soulka (Music, Song & Dance)
July	The Tall Ships Race 2011 Stromness Shopping Week Sanday Soulka (Wrecks & Signals)
August	Orkney Beer Festival County Show and various island agricultural shows

	Sanday Soulka (Food, Farming & Fishing)
September	Orkney Science Festival Orkney Blues Festival Sanday Soulka (Selkies, Sand & the Scadman's skull)
October	Orkney Storytelling Festival Harvest Homes

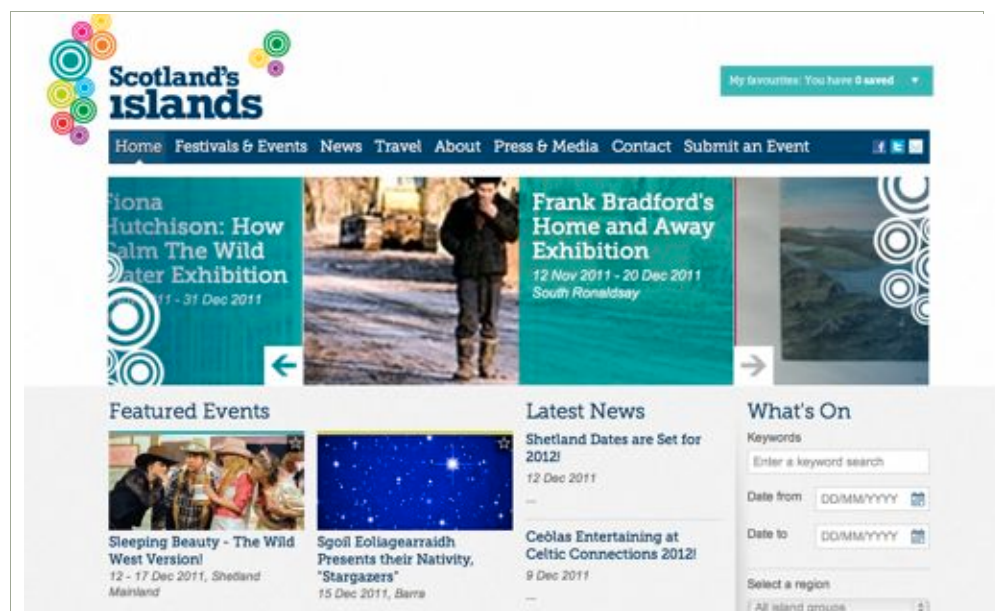
Table 4: The principal Orkney Festivals, Summer 2011

Source: VisitOrkney<sup>57</sup>

Some events, like the Ba', amateur drama and traditional music, have deep roots in Orkney society. Others have been established or found their present form in the past 30 years. These newer events have often been shaped with a conscious intention of promoting economic or cultural development, but this is not a new idea: Stromness Shopping Week, as the title suggests, was established in 1949 by the Chamber of Commerce as a way to attract business to the town.

*'Stromness Shopping Week is imprinted in the DNA of every Stromnessian – so much so that, like salmon returning to their spawning grounds, every year many folk brought up in Stromness who now live "sooth" return home for that week.'*

In 1982, the Tourism Board, then under the leadership of Josh Gourlay, was involved in the establishment of Orkney Folk Festival, aiming to attract tourists outside high season. This thinking underlay the decision to base it in Stromness rather than Kirkwall, which was seen to benefit already from the St Magnus Festival. Ten years later, the Tourist Board was again active in supporting the development of the first Science Festival, in September this time.<sup>58</sup>



In 2011, Orkney's festivals received a boost through the Scotland's Islands programme, a partnership of the six local authorities with island communities, working with Highlands & Islands Enterprise, EventScotland and VisitScotland to promote tourism. The programme encouraged inter-island partnership and allowed existing events, including the St Magnus Festival, the Science Festival and the Folk Festival to

offer more ambitious programmes. It led to the creation of new initiatives including the first Orkney Book Festival, the Papay Gyro Nights International Art Festival, and the Sanday Soulka, a series of monthly themed weekends designed to attract visitors to spend time on the island.

Orkney is also host to many smaller cultural events. Some, like the St Magnus Festival's Composers' and Conductors' Courses, are allied to existing activities; others are stand alone events, such as the Viking Culture Summer School held in July 2011 by the Centre for Nordic Studies.

But such developments would not be possible without the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals. The impetus behind the Folk Festival was the love of traditional music shared by the handful of people who became its first committee and the determination that Orkney should be at least as lively a place in these terms as Shetland. Some of those people have stayed involved for nearly thirty years, giving huge amounts of time and effort to making something happen just because they can.

The Folk Festival receives a small amount of funding – amounting to less than 10% of its budget – from Orkney Islands Council, so each year the committee takes on a significant financial risk. Most of the other festivals receive no public funding at all. While some want to see grant aid increased, others recognise the drawbacks it would bring. Certainly greater dependence on public funding can reduce autonomy and control, while even the apparent security offered by public funding is less reliable at a time of cutbacks. In the end, hard as things may sometimes be, the strength of Orkney's festivals lies in the pleasure that people get from being involved. The principal risk is that the burdens of committee membership and voluntary work outweigh their satisfactions.

### 3.3.3 Other performing arts

Finally, Orkney's living heritage remains a distinctive asset that many people care deeply for. Starting with dialect and the unique Orcadian accent, its principal forms are dance, music and story. There are still many Orcadians whose imaginations were formed by the musical voices of parents and grandparents passing down stories they had acquired in the same way. The tradition of Harvest Homes continues in rural parishes, albeit less strongly than in the past. Young Farmers Clubs are active in dances and drama as well as agricultural fairs and competitions.

Amateur theatre thrives in Orkney, which is one of the strongest areas of the Scottish Community Drama Association. It can be hard to get tickets for productions at the Orkney Arts Theatre, with companies from across the county coming to Kirkwall to perform. Orkney Camerata, Orkney Orchestra, the Mayfield Singers, Kirkwall Amateur Operatic Society and other groups provide opportunities for participation and concerts. The islands have a thriving rock and blues scene some of whose bands have achieved Scottish success: Orkney Youth Music Forum currently lists 34 different groups.<sup>59</sup> In fact, this website lists 102 different music and drama groups, including choirs, bands, folk groups, chamber music ensembles and much more. This amounts to a group for every 200 inhabitants – an extraordinary level of activity.





Slow Ride, (Tom O'Brien), from a review of Orkney Blues Festival on Northings<sup>60</sup>

There has been a huge revival of interest in traditional music since the 1960s, when school music teaching was at something of a low ebb. Today, hundreds of youngsters across the islands are learning to play instruments through the education service, Orkney Traditional Music Project and privately.

*'It was very staid, very traditional, they had the Strathspey and Reel Society, and the fiddle and accordion, and one or two youngsters, but it was mostly older men that played the fiddles. Very few young people played – nothing like today; it's just so different today,'*

The results appear in the steadily increasing quality and ambition of local events and in the emergence of successful young bands such as The Chair and Broken Strings. There is confidence among traditional musicians and enthusiasts who increasingly see themselves as Shetland's equals in traditional music.

Finally, it is important to note that many of the islands have their own distinctive arts and cultural activities, often linked with the schools. In 2000, a group of Hoy residents took over the derelict former school in North Walls and have transformed it into the Gable End Theatre. The auditorium seats are from the old Phoenix cinema in Kirkwall (itself now recreated within the Pickaquoy Centre). The programme includes professional musicians and, more rarely, theatre companies, amateur productions and a monthly film club. Between 15 October and 26 November 2011, the theatre held a local talent show to raise funds for the East African Famine appeal, a traditional music gig by Jeana Leslie and Siobhan Miller and screened three films.

### 3.4 VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

Visual art is, in some ways, a relatively recent development in Orkney's culture. Even very poor societies create immaterial culture in the form of music, song, story and dance. Craft, understood as the making of necessary objects and tools, has always given people a platform through which to express their aesthetic values; this was

particularly true for women who had responsibility for the domestic environment. But fine art, including what is now called contemporary art, depends on a surplus of resources, including wealth, time and education. Orcadians have always expressed their visual sense in everyday objects, but there have only been large numbers of trained artists in the county since the 1970s.



The Pier Art Centre, Stromness, June 2011

### 3.4.2 The Pier Arts Centre

The Pier Arts Centre in Stromness has, in the brief decade of its existence, been an 'alma mater' for all the arts and artists in Orkney. It has also, of course, kept open house to artists and their work from every country and continent.

George Mackay Brown, Stromness 11 January 1988<sup>61</sup>

As the HIE brief for this study implies, the Pier Arts Centre stands in relation to the visual arts in Orkney in much the same way as the St Magnus Festival does to the performing arts. Each has a position of undisputed (if not unquestioned) leadership, and is a visible symbol of excellence and continuity. They show Orkney what the world can do and the world what Orkney can do. They provide a pathway to professional and career development for Orkney based artists that enables them to see and hear, engage with and feel part of, the international discourse of their practice. They both emerged in the second half of the 1970s, the Pier opening its doors in 1979, after a similar period in which a small group of supporters nurtured an idea that few, at the start, believed in. And both were the result of that crucial partnership between Orcadians and incomers.

The incomer behind the Pier was Margaret Gardiner, an Englishwoman who had visited Orkney since the 1950s and come to love it deeply. A close friend of Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, she spent much time among British modernist artists of the interwar period and built a valuable collection shaped by taste and association more than a collector's approach. Her friendships with Orcadians such as Sylvia Wishart and Ernest Marwick led her to leave her collection to the people of Orkney. That idea soon became an ambitious plan to create an art centre in Stromness to house the collection and show the work of Orkney's growing artistic community.

The Pier Arts Centre was housed in some historic warehouses on the harbour, gradually converted to their new use with funds from Occidental Oil, among others. The Scottish Arts Council's early support for running costs was vital and this has remained the principal source of public funding for the Pier, with Orkney Islands Council contributing small amounts until its recent review of spending. Thus in the mid 1990s, SAC contributed over 35% of the Pier's annual budget and OIC 10-15%, with the rest being earned income and sponsorship.

Under its first curator, Erlend Brown, the Pier established itself as an essential hub for visual artists not just in Stromness or West Mainland but across the county. As with the St Magnus Festival, the project had its doubters and it took time to win the town's wholehearted support. That was achieved partly because the Pier sought to make itself approachable: even in the 1990s, there was a friendly informality that helped embed the gallery in this down to earth working port, Hilary Hamilton conducted a visitor survey there as part of her MA studies, and interviewed the then administrator, Maureen Gray:

HH 'Some people in the survey have asked for a café or at least tea or coffee.'

MG 'If I'm making a cup of coffee and there are folk sitting in the sun on the pier or eating their sandwiches out there I ask them if they'd like a cup.'

Hilary Hamilton, *Generating Tourism through the Arts* (1995)<sup>62</sup>

This exchange says something about the character of Orkney's cultural life, which continues even with the professionalisation discussed in 3.6 below. But it also highlights how far the Pier has come since those days. There is still no café – Stromness has its own a few steps away – but the Pier now offers facilities that match those of the best European galleries. Visitors and critics alike have admired the quality of the spaces for both permanent and temporary exhibitions, their unique visual interaction with the harbour and their sympathetic connection with the townscape of Stromness.

The Pier was transformed under its current director, Neil Firth, between 2005 and 2007 through an award-winning design by Reiach and Hall. In a much-enlarged building, it has been possible to display the permanent collection in ways that connect the work wonderfully with the harbour outside the windows. The collection itself has been carefully expanded over the years and is now a Recognised Collection of National Significance to Scotland (alongside the archaeology collection of the Orkney Museum in Kirkwall).<sup>63</sup> Equally important to the continuing growth of the contemporary visual arts in Orkney are the new temporary exhibition spaces that improve the Pier's capacity to bring the best international work to Stromness. Orcadians now have opportunities to see the work of artists they might have had to travel far to see in the past.

The redevelopment enabled the Pier to strengthen its education and outreach work, which includes practical and experiential activities at the gallery, artists' talks and activities touring to the other islands. Partnership with the education service brings regular school visits and supports curriculum related work.

*'It's a lot easier to get students to go to the Pier Arts Centre now, than it ever was before. They find it a lovely space to be in, vibrant, the views out are fantastic...'*



Visitor numbers, which had steadily increased since the 1980s, rose sharply following the redevelopment, from 21,700 in 2004/05, the last year before closure for building work, to 38,511 in 2008/09, the first full year after reopening. They have levelled at about 37,500 in the two subsequent years. In comparison, the Orkney Museum in Kirkwall had about 29,500 visitors in 2010/11; however, given the changing nature of the Pier's programme, it is to be expected that it receives more returning visitors. Although numbers of visitors are not huge when compared with those attracted by comparable facilities in more populous areas, they are significant in relation to the local population. In 2009/10, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery – the largest city museums service in England – received 856,000 visitors, or 0.82 visitors for every person living in Birmingham.<sup>64</sup> By contrast, Orkney Museum received 1.47 visitors for every person living in Orkney and the Pier had 1.83. Whilst, as ever, such comparisons should be treated with caution, they give some indication of the Pier's success in its context; and of its place in the visitor economy of Stromness and as a centre for artists in Orkney.

This is particularly felt on Mainland, where 80% of Orcadians live. Among residents of Orkney's other islands, there is sometimes a detachment from the work of the Pier. There are similar barriers to visits – particularly for school groups – as exist in relation to the festivals and some people want more touring exhibitions and outreach work away from the Mainland.



The Pier Art Centre, Stromness, June 2011

The Pier's role as a focal point, meeting ground and showcase for Orkney's artists is vital. The gallery's own exhibition programme presents local artists in regular group shows and solo exhibitions of key Orkney figures such as Margaret Tait, Erlend Brown, Gunnie Moburg and Sylvia Wishart. The work of mid-career Orkney artists, such as Frances Pelly, Colin Kirkpatrick and Colin Johnstone, and younger artists, such as Anne Bevan and Steven MacIver, has been exhibited, while the Pier is a natural venue for showing the results of external programmes like Rebecca Marr's Art and Agriculture Residency in 2007.<sup>65</sup> The gallery's own thematic exhibitions, for instance on contemporary knitwear in 1994, have enabled Orkney artists to see themselves in a national or international context.

Of course, some artists feel undervalued by the Pier, as they do by galleries in cities across the UK. While there will always be differences of opinion about the work of individuals, the exhibition programme shows a broad range of Orkney artists. The smallness of the community, in which everyone's work is known, means that decisions about selection are very public. They must be seen to be fair and reasonable, even if they can be disagreed with, for the gallery to maintain the broad legitimacy it has among Orkney's artists.

The different strands of the Pier's work have contributed hugely to Orkney becoming a centre where contemporary artists can live, work and develop their practice. The excellence of its collection and the ambition of its programme set a standard unusual in a remote, rural area. As in so many areas of Orkney's culture, from classical and traditional music to jewellery, the benchmark set by the leading organisation has wider effects, legitimising aspiration and raising the expectations of audiences and consumers.

The Pier plays a valuable role in supporting the work of other arts organisations. It is a venue for Orkney Folk Festival, St Magnus International Festival, Stromness Shopping Week and Orkney Science Festival, hosting readings, workshops and other activities. It hosts events throughout the year for Orkney Arts Society and dovetails its own programming with these external partners. The success of its redevelopment is widely seen as a benchmark for the Stromness Townscape Heritage Initiative, which has attracted £3.9 million towards conservation of the central areas and repaving of Victoria Street.<sup>66</sup>

The redevelopment has made the Pier Arts Centre one of Britain's leading contemporary visual art centres, and a member of the Plus Tate Network, alongside much larger galleries such as Arnolfini in Bristol, Nottingham Contemporary and the Hepworth in Wakefield.<sup>67</sup> Comparisons in this area are particularly unreliable, given the differences in buildings, collections and histories involved, but the Stromness gallery is now working alongside peers with far greater resources in terms of staff and public subsidy. The Pier's finances have increased in recent years: in 2009/10, its annual budget was over £425,000, of which £222,200 (52%) came from the Scottish Arts Council and £51,304 (12%) from Orkney Islands Council; the rest was earned income, donations and one-off grants.<sup>68</sup> The transition to the larger, more ambitious and more costly organisation it has become through the redevelopment was aided by grants from a major trust that is now coming to an end.

In short, the Pier, like the St Magnus Festival, is operating at a level of activity, ambition and reach that is far in excess of what might be expected given the level of financial assistance it receives. As a public gallery and museum, rather than a performing arts festival, it also has considerably less opportunity to earn income. While this Orcadian over-achievement is in many ways laudable, the question of its sustainability cannot be avoided; it is considered further in Part 6.

### 3.4.3 Orkney jewellery



*'Most of the people here have a pair of hands or a pair of eyes and they'll paint or make something and sell it. They're not necessarily coming here to start employing five or 10 or 20 people – it's only the jewellery business that's going to do that.'*

Orkney's jewellery sector is economically and socially important as a source of revenue and employment. There are more than 10 companies creating and selling jewellery in Orkney, following a path first laid by Ola Gorie in the 1960s. Several of those who have gone on to found companies of their own worked and learned their craft in Ola Gorie's company. At one point in the 1990s, Orkney was described as the largest centre of jewellery manufacture north of Birmingham and though there has been some contraction since then, and some transfer of manufacturing abroad by Ortak, it remains the largest concentration of jewellery businesses in Scotland. Ola Gorie, Sheila Fleet and Ortak all expanded into retail outlets outside Orkney, though Ola Gorie have since changed policy to focus exclusively on their store in Kirkwall.

The emergence of online retailing enabled the larger businesses to expand into new markets but it also highlights a challenge. How can creative people stand out in the crowd, when the world's work can be compared at the click of a mouse button? Should Orkney jewellers compete with attractive but low-cost products made in emerging economies or focus on the higher value, handmade end of the market?



Sheila Fleet website, December 2011

The jewellery sector is also culturally important, setting a high standard for design and craftsmanship that is strongly rooted in the unique archaeology, historic remains and natural world of the Islands. It sets Orkney apart from most other rural parts of Scotland, and indeed the UK, where the retail offer to visitors is rarely of such high quality and value. The benchmark set by designers like Sheila Fleet and Ola Gorie implicitly challenges other artists and makers selling to tourists to produce work that will stand comparison in a Kirkwall shop window.

#### 3.4.4 Orkney Crafts Association (OCA)

The Orkney Crafts Association is the principal link between the larger craft industries in the county and individual craftspeople. Established in the early 1990s (the exact date seems lost in the mists of time) the Association is a key marketing tool for the county's leading professional makers. Its emergence may have been a response, whether conscious or not, to a gradual diminution of support available for individual artists and for makers wishing to attend trade fairs, which many had found so important in developing their businesses in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the craftspeople moving to Orkney at that time had taken opportunities to present at fairs in Scotland and further afield with support from the Orkney Islands Council, the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIE's precursor) and SAC. Although some support continues today – for example, the OIC Economic Development department offered support for new makers to attend Scotland's Trade Fair in Glasgow in January 2011 – there is a perception that this is not as great as in the past.

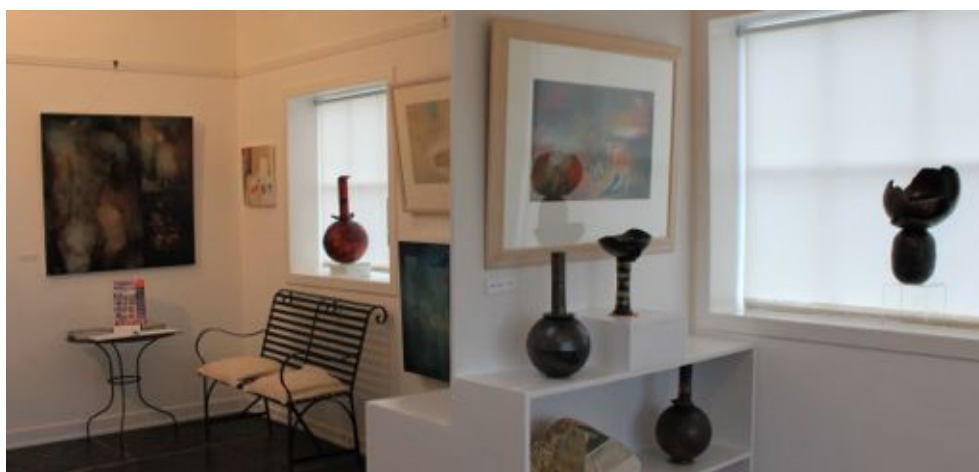
The Crafts Association promotes the work of individual crafts people and businesses through three main routes: the Craft Trail, a summer shop in Kirkwall and the website.<sup>69</sup> The Craft Trail is promoted in a 24-page booklet featuring 15 sites open to visitors and a further seven OCA members not on the trail itself. All are listed on the OCA website, with links to the makers' own sites:

Jewellery and Silversmiths	Textiles and Knitwear	Art and Photography	Woodwork and Pottery
Aurora Jewellery *	Castaway Crafts	For art's sake	David Holmes +
Celina Rupp Jewellery *	Hume Sweet Hume * +	Hoxa Tapestry *	Fraser Anderson *
Fluke Jewellery *	Quernstone	Jane Glue *	Fursbreck Pottery *
Ola Gorie	Tait & Style	Northlight *	Scapa Crafts *
Ortak	The Woolshed *	Pam Farmer	Scapa Studios
Orkneying Silversmiths*	The Workshop and Loft Gallery *		Westray Pottery +
Peter Rowland			
Sheila Fleet *	* Site on the Orkney Craft Trail		
Stewart Moar *	+ Site not accessible by road from Mainland Orkney		

Brown and white road signs help guide visitors to the workshops and studios regularly open to the public. The trail is widely admired and study visits have been made from the Western Isles and Shetland to learn from the experience and test the transferability of the idea: Shetland's first craft trail was duly launched, with about 40 par-

ticipants, in May 2011. The Association's Bridge Street shop – opposite Orkney Ferries' Kirkwall terminal – is open during the summer season and provides a showcase and sales point in the capital, alongside the shops run by several of its members with larger businesses, such as Sheila Fleet, Ola Gorie, Ortak and Judith Glue.

Many artists, makers and craftspeople are not members of Orkney Craft Association. Partly, this is about standards: the Association aims to represent professional work that represents the best of Orkney's craft culture. But there are people who aren't members whose work would meet that standard, so there are other reasons for not belonging, to do with costs, need or perceptions. The issue was not raised as a problem in any of the discussions undertaken for this report, a further instance of Orkney people's ability to manage issues that easily cause disputes within the arts and cultural sectors without allowing them to become seriously divisive.



Peter Brown's Gallery, Westray, August 2011

### 3.4.5 Individual artists

As has been mentioned, the Crafts Association represents the larger and more commercial side of Orkney's visual arts ecology: its big trees are very visible in the landscape. But Orkney is home to hundreds of artists, designers, potters, photographers, textile artists, filmmakers and other creative people. A mapping exercise undertaken for the study has identified about 200 Orkney residents whose primary activity is in art or craft. This list is certainly incomplete, while there are many others whose artistic work is a smaller part of their daily life and identity, to say nothing of the thousands involved to different degrees in voluntary cultural activity. It would be impossible to calculate an accurate figure for professional artists and makers in Orkney because, as is typical of island communities, many people do more than one kind of work.

*'The thing about working in the arts in Orkney is that many people don't have just one job; they might do a bit of this and a bit of that – people expect it.'*

Furthermore, artists often earn more from other activities such as teaching or commercial design than from the practice of their art. But without that practice, they would be poorer teachers or designers and probably less in demand. It is their artistic skill and imagination that enables them to earn other kinds of income. Art-



ists also adjust their activity in response to their market, work opportunities, needs and other factors. Edwin Rendall of Westray is a very Orcadian example: a farmer, who first tried selling his photographs at a car boot sale in the 1990s:

From this beginning, the Wheeling Steen Gallery was opened in 1995. At that time it was more of a hobby than anything else as farming was Edwin's main occupation. It has now developed into a family business and in November 2008 they moved into a new purpose built Gallery.

Wheeling Steen Gallery website, 2011<sup>70</sup>

Edwin's son has now taken on the farm and its cattle so that the rest of the Rendall family can focus on the new business. At which point on this 20 year journey did Edwin Rendall 'become' an artist?

So calculating the economic value of cultural activity in Orkney, or even the numbers of people involved, is all but impossible, because it is woven into the very fabric of local economic and social life. This echoes the discussion of tourism in 3.1.6 above, where it was observed that the arts are an inextricable part of Orkney's tourism offer, even when they are not the principal reason for a tourist to visit. Tourists walking through Kirkwall or Stromness, or for that matter in Finstown, St Margaret's Hope or Westray, would enjoy their time less without the arts and cultural facilities.



Stromness Open Windows exhibition, June 2011

Most artists who contributed to the study were reconciled to the professional disadvantage of working in Orkney, whether they had grown up in the county or had settled there as established artists. The distance from markets and the transport costs are obvious and partly explain why jewellery, which suffers least from these handicaps, has been so successful. It is for this reason that some artists and makers value the support made available for them to be present in trade shows and art fairs, especially in international markets.

The growth of digital media and communication has made it easier for Orkney artists to be aware of trends and innovations in their field of practice than in the past, while the Pier gives direct access to at least some of that work. Even so, it is evident that an artist living in Stromness cannot have the same contact with the work of her peers as an artist living in Shoreditch. Some make regular trips to see exhibitions and nurture contacts. Others positively value distance from artistic centres, feeling that it leaves much more space to work.

Some artists believe their decision to live in Orkney is interpreted to their disadvantage by the arts world, which may see it as lack of interest in, ambition for or capacity to compete in the international market. It is true that, even with a substantial reputation, an artist may find it hard to keep the art world's interest without a regular presence and visibility. Evidently, however, this is a risk that artists moving to Orkney seem prepared to take. Indeed, for a number choosing Orkney as a professional base is a deliberate rejection of or challenge to artistic values they question.

Although the arts and crafts are very visible in Orkney – a stroll along the main streets of Stromness or Kirkwall shows how present they are – and they are often mentioned in the context of tourism or the economy, it is not clear how consistently they are valued by the county's public administrations. The Orkney Islands Council's annual Economic Reviews do not mention crafts or jewellery, though they are presumably included in the 500 manufacturing jobs reported.<sup>71</sup>

Yet it seems this wasn't always the case: One academic study of Orkney's crafts industries observes admiringly that:

Such is the importance of the craft sector to Orkney that in the Orkney Economic Review published in 1998 by Orkney Island Council, 'Craft Industries' are discussed alongside other key sectors of the economy such as oil, tourism and fish farming. From estimates at that time the sector accounted for some 22.5% of value added in the manufacturing sector. It was dominated by two successful jewellery companies, Ortak and Ola Gorie, but did include a large number of smaller firms. The last data for employment dates from 1994 when 169 full-timers and 103 part-timers were identified. Although there is no hard data on the numbers employed today in the sector the general view is that it has increased substantially on the 1994 figure.

Source: McAuley & Fillis, 2005, 'The Orkney Based Craft Entrepreneur: Remote Yet Global?'<sup>72</sup>

The absence of reliable data about the visual arts and crafts sector identified here is understandable given the difficulty of defining it mentioned above. Nonetheless, it remains a problem that may result in an undervaluing of its direct and indirect economic value, as well as its wider social and cultural significance.

While this is a problem that affects all cultural activity in Orkney, the festivals, heritage sites and venues operate at a scale and with ticket sales that make it easier for them to demonstrate their worth. The visual arts and crafts, beyond the tall trees such as the Pier, Ola Gorie, Ortak, Sheila Fleet and a few others, is typified by individual artists and makers whose work slips easily below the radar of economic analysis. Each one may indeed be of little economic importance: collectively they make an important contribution to Orkney's prosperity, attractivity, image and culture.

### 3.4.6 Orkney and the creative industries

Orkney is exceptional in the extent to which its creative industries are major employers, yet rooted in the "conventional" arts, primarily the crafts. This offers a paradigm to oppose the urban models of the Creative industries, concentrated on technology-based industries, and which has relevance in other areas of the Highlands and Islands.

HIE Research Brief, 2011

It is true, as HIE implies, that Orkney's artists are most likely to work in established media and disciplines: painting, ceramics, metalwork, textiles, wood and so on. Per-

formance and conceptual art, film, animation and digital media are less present in Orkney than in most British cities. In itself that cannot be considered a weakness: all cultures have distinctive qualities and it is a mistake to expect to be good at everything. There are issues of scale, distance, technology and culture that still make Orkney less attractive to a digital animation company than Bristol: equally, those same issues may make it more attractive to a painter or weaver. So far, so nothing. The question is whether Orkney's relative weakness in say, advertising or new media, should be seen as a liability or simply a fact of its position, culture and interests.

Orkney's cultural sector certainly does not fit the stereotype of the creative industries promoted by government, public agencies and the industry – including the media, which is not disinterested in these matters. The dominant image of the creative industries may be seen in the UK Department of Trade and Industry sponsored UK Creative Industries Marketing Toolkit, which claims that:

UK creativity is hugely influential across the world, with a reputation for innovation, edgy brilliance and entrepreneurial spirit. It is a powerful asset that you can harness to boost your company's own marketing messages.

UK Creative Industries Marketing Toolkit<sup>73</sup>

The site proposes a hierarchical plan of the creative industries, divided between products, services and media, and lists sectors such as television, film, publishing, fashion, music, animation, computer games, advertising, design and architecture. The style, language, and messages are all very contemporary, urban and technological. There is no room here for anything made by hand or that uses methods older than the Blair government.



Arts and crafts outlet, Kirkwall, A2011

But some of this is just rhetoric. The creative industries are skilled at marketing and give it a great deal of attention. If we read the 'key messages' without a preconceived idea of what the creative industries means, they apply perfectly well to Orkney:

UK creativity inspires the world, producing a stream of brilliant individuals and creative teams who have been hugely influential in global media, entertainment and the arts. The tradition of maverick individuality in the UK stimulates innovation and creates a fertile environment for commercial exploitation and development

UK Creative Industries Marketing Toolkit<sup>74</sup>



There is nothing in this statement that does not apply to Orkney. Edwin Muir, George Mackay Brown, Peter Maxwell Davies and their peers are certainly 'brilliant individuals who have been hugely influential'. The 'tradition of maverick individuality' would seem to sum up a side of Orkney's character perfectly, while the county is nothing if not 'a fertile environment for commercial exploitation and development'.

In fact, as HIE hints at in the passage from the brief cited at the start of this section, the strength of Orkney's creative industries may be their difference from what happens elsewhere. This not only gives them a competitive distinction – why go to Orkney for what you can get in the next street? – but may also protect them at a time when some of the core economic assumptions that underpin the creative economy are being challenged by the acute instability of the global economy. When the consumer society is contracting and corporate buyers focus on value, when investors seek security in gold, it may be that Orkney's time-tested values and products will seem secure rather than conservative.

Occasionally, in talking to some of the brilliant, maverick individuals in Orkney's artistic community, one senses an appetite for doing things differently, for challenging convention, even for radicalism. That is also what brought some people to the islands in the past. Orkney's artists do things differently in some ways: perhaps it's time to speak more of that difference in the promotion of its culture rather than play it down to be more like other places.

### 3.5 LITERATURE

#### 3.5.1 Public support for literature

*'What I remember is him say longingly – because he was a teacher and didn't like it – "Of course, George doesn't work; he's very poor, but he doesn't work..." And I thought, this sounds very nice, a good way to be.'*

Writers in the UK have long felt at a disadvantage where public policy and resources for culture are concerned. Literature makes up a very small proportion of Arts Council spending across the UK. Arts Council England is by far the largest such body with an annual budget (not including National Lottery funds) of about £330 million a year in the period 2012-15, after a £29.6% cut to its grant-in-aid from the UK government: of that £330 million, just £7.2 million is allocated to literature.<sup>75</sup> The bulk of this spending – as with Creative Scotland<sup>76</sup> – goes to supporting publication of work that is insufficiently commercial, supporting organisations that encourage the practice of creative writing, and writers' bursaries and residencies.<sup>77</sup> It is, like most Arts Council spending, essentially supply-side: that is, it supports the production of art.

On the face of it, this looks extraordinary in a country with a literary culture as ancient and as rich as Britain, and it certainly arouses the wrath of many writers, literary organisations and others with an interest in the written word. But two things should be borne in mind.

First, the literary economy is unlike that of performing or visual arts. Much of it is commercially very successful and neither wants nor needs subsidy. Most writers do not make a good living, but nor do most painters, musicians or, for that matter, su-

permarket shelf-stackers, though the former have nicer working lives and higher social status. Writing is a slow craft: unless they are writing airport thrillers, most novelists don't earn enough from their work to pay them the minimum wage, given the time it takes to write. Writers therefore write because they are passionate about it, giving the time to their craft that others spend in the pub, on the hills or asleep. Like all the arts in Western societies today, writing is socially admired, as well as loved in itself: that's why so many people want to be writers, and while they do, most publishers will take their pick and pay what they can get away with.

Secondly, literature is treated differently by the state *because* it is so highly prized. In 1850, under the Public Libraries Act, literature became the first (and in England and Wales still the only) cultural duty given to local government. Subsequent legislation has reinforced the responsibility of councils in this area, so that in 2006/07 there were about 3,500 libraries in England and 269 million books loans took place.<sup>78</sup> The latest figures for Scotland, for 2008/09, show 541 libraries and a further 82 mobile libraries, with about 21% of the resident population being library service members.<sup>79</sup> In 2009/10 the UK as a whole spent just under £1.2 billion on public library services – three times Arts Council England's budget.<sup>80</sup>

Why then do people who love literature still feel that it is the poor relation at the cultural table, served last and least? Perhaps because that £1.2 billion is invested in the demand side of the creative economy: i.e. it facilitates access to books and encourages reading. Writers benefit indirectly because more books are sold – public libraries spent £129 million on books in 2008/09<sup>81</sup> – and directly through public lending rights revenues. But it's still a long way from getting a grant to finish your novel.



Andrew Motion poetry reading, St Magnus Festival 2009

### 3.5.2 Literary life in Orkney

#### Support for literature

This outline of public support for literature is necessary because Orkney might seem to be rather underdeveloped in this field compared to performing arts and visual arts. There is no writers' centre like the Pier, while the Book and the Storytelling festivals are fairly recent additions to the calendar and still operating at a much smaller scale. But there is a newly built library and archive in Kirkwall and another is planned for Stromness, as part of the Pierhead Regeneration. There are also bookshops in both

towns, so the demand side of the literary economy is well catered for. If the supply side has been strong in the past (Muir, Storer Clouston, Linklater, Scott-Moncrieff, Mackay Brown) and if it continues today through several nationally recognised Orkney writers, the main factor is individual genius rather than institutional support. In recent years, that has begun to change.

### Support for writers



Participants in Orkney Writers Course, 2011

Poetry readings have been a feature of the St Magnus Festival from the beginning, but the first writing fellowship in Orkney was awarded in 1997 to Todd McEwen with funding from the OIC Education Department and the Scottish Arts Council. Further fellowships followed held by Janet MacInnes (1999), George Gunn (2001) Struan Sinclair (2002/03) and Jan Natanson in (2004/05). The Skald Festival was developed in 2001, and took place again in 2003. In 2006, the George Mackay Brown Writing Fellowship was launched to take this work onto a more established level, with funding through the Scottish Arts Council pARTners residency fund, HIE and Orkney Islands Council: the first GMB Fellow, in 2007, was Pam Beasant.

Pam made the Fellowship a much more ambitious and high profile opportunity, developing workshops, supporting local writers' groups, holding a writers' retreat in Hoy, a GMB memorial lecture and a three-day literature festival, *Shore to Shore*. Two books were published, including an anthology of 50 local authors. This approach continued in the second GMB Fellowship, held by the Glasgow-based writer, Nalini Paul. The GMB Fellowship has developed more recently through partnerships with the St Magnus Festival on the 2011 Orkney Writer's Course, and with funding from Scotland's Islands for the 2011 Book Festival in March 2011. The support of the Library Service is also important, and the GMB Fellowship will have space in the new Stromness library.

There has also been a recent revival of interest in the spoken word and storytelling in particular. The Orcadian Story Trust, originally formed a decade ago has been revived as the promoter of a Storytelling Festival that took place for the first time in October 2010. The 2011 edition ran from Thursday 27 to Sunday 30 October and saw events in Stromness, Kirkwall, Hoy Kirk, St Margaret's Hope and Corrigall Farm Museum. There seems to be a renewed confidence in the value of Orkney dialect poetry and stories and this may prove a distinctive addition to the festival calendar.

Many Orcadians involved in writing, storytelling and reading would wish to see the art of the word take an equal place alongside the visual and performing arts in Orkney's contemporary culture. Given the exceptional writers who have been and are now associated with Orkney, that is not an unrealistic ambition, though the

funding position is challenging. But it would be a great pity if Orkney did not make as much of its spoken and literary heritage as it has of other parts of its culture.

### 3.6 POLICY AND PLANNING

#### 3.6.1 'Very irregularly built'

STROMNESS: A burgh of barony, very irregularly built, each proprietor having apparently planted his house to suit his own convenience.

Blacks Picturesque Tourist Guide to Scotland (1851)<sup>82</sup>



Stromness, 2011

It will be evident from the preceding pages that Orkney's current varied and complex cultural scene is not the result of any central planning or policy directive. It is essentially the product of individual enthusiasms finding local support, though this can be obscured by high ambitions. It was suggested in the study brief that the Pier and the St Magnus Festival were 'top down developments [that] would today be at odds with the mantra that such developments should be bottom up'. In fact, each owes its existence to chance meetings between private individuals. Each might have happened anyway, but not there, not then and certainly not in that way.

At its best, this has given the county a cultural landscape as individual and as attractive as Stromness on a sunny day. It might look untidy, but it works: more than that, it is because it is unlike anywhere else that it delights visitor and resident alike. Of course, one should be wary of romanticising this. As anyone who has driven in Stromness will appreciate, idiosyncrasy does not always sit easily with speed; but then, people in a hurry tend not to want to live on islands.

#### **Orkney Islands Council funding for culture**

This pattern of cultural development has meant that, unlike some local authorities, Orkney Islands Council has not needed to take direct responsibility for most arts and culture provision in the county. Indeed the independent nature of Orkney's cultural activists has left little room for direct council services here.

Instead, OIC has, over the past 30 years, provided grants to independent and voluntary organisations in gradually increasing amounts. As these have responded to an evolving landscape, a pattern of funding has emerged based on a long series of indi-

vidual decisions involving different council departments. Even with the time and help of OIC officers, it has proved very difficult to make a full calculation of the Council's investment through grant aid, capital spending and other budgets to the arts and cultural sector. The two principal schemes in 2009 were the Festivals Fund and Grants to Independent Museums and Heritage Centres. The first, supported the St Magnus Festival and the Folk Festival, as well as summer schools and other events: in the 2009/10 round, this had a budget of £121,000. The second had a budget of £53,600 that year. Other grants, for instance to the Orkney Arts Theatre, have been made over the years directly by the Education, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee. Capital grants have been made through various schemes that have existed for longer or shorter periods in the past 30 years, including Art in Public Places, the Heritage Fund, the Oil Revenue Fund Exhibits Scheme and the Community Development Fund. It is not only the sources of the funds that makes calculation difficult: it is the recipients. Thus Hoy Kirk received a capital grant from OIC in 2007 towards its restoration. The building is valuable to the island's heritage, and also now a venue for events such as the 2011 Storytelling Festival, but the grant itself will have been spent on building work. Is this a cultural investment in the same way as the grant to the Orkney Folk Festival?

In 2011, Orkney Islands Council adopted a new approach to its funding following a review by Clare Gee, the Arts, Museums and Heritage Service Manager, designed to create a more equitable distribution of resources across the sector and to establish a stream of project funding open to applications – £27,000 in 2010/11. As part of this change, the St Magnus Festival grant was reduced and that of the Pier Arts Centre increased, lessening the historic disparity between these organisations' funding.<sup>83</sup> Budget constraints led to further reductions of 10% across all grants in 2011/12 and similar limitations are anticipated in the coming financial year.



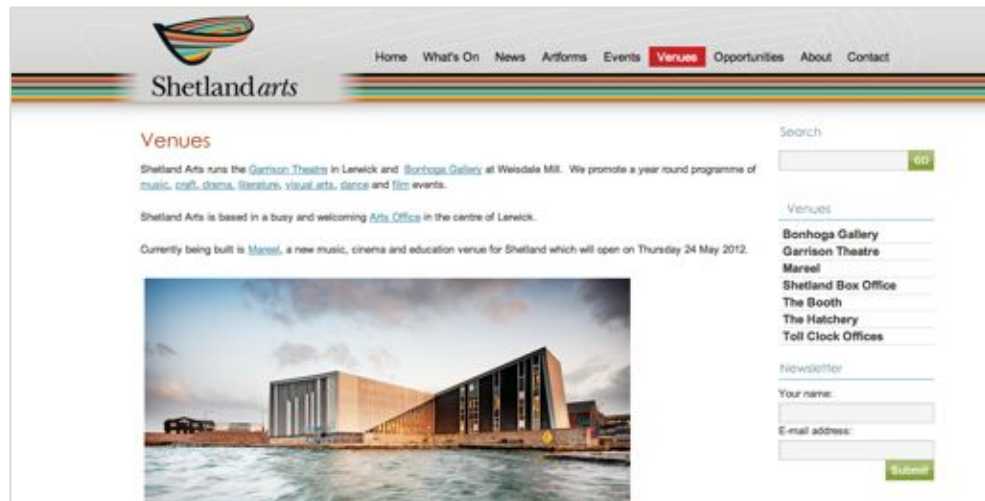
Orkney Museum, Kirkwall, June 2011

### Orkney and Shetland

It is surprising that people involved with Orkney's arts and culture rarely made comparisons with Shetland during the discussions and interviews for this study. The amount of funding invested into the arts by the Shetland Islands Council, through



the Shetland Charitable Trust established to manage revenue accrued from the oil industry, is large – considerably larger than is made available by Orkney Islands Council. To some extent, the approaches taken to the arts by local government in Shetland and Orkney are so different that comparison is not very meaningful. On the other hand, the contrast may help to highlight Orkney's distinctive route.



Shetland Arts Website, showing Mareel, December 2011

Shetland's principal arts organisation is Shetland Arts Development Agency, formed in 2006 as a successor to a trust established in 1986 as a mechanism for investing revenues from the discovery of oil into culture. The Shetland Charitable Trust remains the principal funder of Shetland Arts, providing a grant of about £750,000 in 2010/11; Creative Scotland gave the organisation £156,000 of foundation funding. Shetland Arts' total income that year, including other grants and earned income, was £1.46 million.<sup>84</sup> With that, it runs the Garrison Theatre in Lerwick, Bonhoga Gallery in Weisdale and a programme of performing and visual arts, film, craft and literature activities throughout the year. Shetland Arts is also building Mareel, a £12 million cinema, music and creative industries centre in Lerwick. All this is articulated in detailed policy and planning documents including a long-term vision and a five-year business plan.

Shetland Arts promotes the value of creativity because we believe that it will play a fundamental role in safeguarding Shetland's future: economically; in terms of the Islands' health and wellbeing; lifelong learning; cultural tourism and heritage; and new media development in the 21st century.

Shetland Arts, A Hansel for Art, Our plan for a creative future (2008)

The contrast with Orkney could not be clearer. It is not just a question of the money invested by Shetland Islands Council through its Charitable Trust, though that is certainly greater than the resources allocated by Orkney Islands Council. Shetland has a model based on central planning and delivery of arts services that is the antithesis of Orkney's complex ecology of in(ter)dependent groups. Of course, Shetland has an independent cultural sector and many freelance practitioners and individual artists, but the core infrastructure and service delivery is undertaken by an arts development agency working to achieve a clear, published vision. Likewise,



Orkney has plans, but they reflect a characteristically Orcadian pragmatism and evolve through the democratic discussions of the Arts Forum (see below).

The point is not to suggest that one model is better than another: there will be various opinions about that. Rather it is to recognise how differently development has taken place in two island groups that seem at a distance to have so much in common – at least in their stories, if not in their fables.

### **Orkney Islands Council cultural services**

Orkney Islands Council does directly provide a Museums Service and a Library and Archives Service. The first manages four museums, three visitor centres, St Magnus Cathedral and 17 interpreted sites across the county. The museums are: the Orkney Museum at Tankerness House in Kirkwall, the Scapa Flow Visitor Centre and Museum at Lyness in Hoy, and farm and folk life museums at Kirbuster and Corrigall. The first two attract large numbers of visitors: 29,538 and 11,576 respectively in 2010/11. The rural museums, both much smaller and more intimate sites, attract about five thousand visitors a year each. The importance of the archaeological collection is nationally recognised and the possibility is being explored of applying for recognition through the National Significance scheme for the military heritage in Hoy.

The museums and their collections are a major cultural asset for Orkney that make a natural link between the prehistoric sites mostly in the guardianship of Historic Scotland and the contemporary arts and crafts. The Orkney Museum is used as a venue for exhibitions of contemporary art, while the Cathedral has occasionally displayed the Sails of St Magnus, which were made for the space. Orkney Museums Service's standards were recognised by full accreditation by Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in 2008.



Orkney Library and Archive, Kirkwall (Orkney Islands Council)

The Library and Archives Service is another example of the county's ability to achieve more than could reasonably be expected of a population of 20,000 people; (the Publick Bibliothick of Kirkwall opened in 1683, the first public library in Scotland). The new central library and archive in Kirkwall was a major new cultural asset from which extensive outreach and online services are run.<sup>85</sup> In 2010, the service held

a lending stock of 188,824 books and almost 7,000 audio and other electronic items, as well as 13,697 reference volumes. There were 6,196 active users who between them made a total of 141,259 visits; more surprisingly perhaps, the number of visits per head of population grew by 8% between 2008 and 2010.<sup>86</sup> The Library and Archives Service is also a key centre for research into family history, one of the important reasons drawing visitors to Orkney: the Archive received 3,266 visitors in 2009/10 and a further 21,255 people used its website. The planned new library in Stromness will transform the quality of services in that town, as well as providing a home for the George Mackay Brown Fellowship.

The other key cultural investment made by OIC is the Pickaquooy Centre, a purpose built sport, leisure, arts and conference facility on the western edge of Kirkwall. Home to the New Phoenix Cinema, the building is also used for larger concerts and arts events that were previously very difficult to put on in the county. In 2011, the St Magnus International Festival community production of Shakespeare's *Tempest* was performed at the centre. Unlike the museums and library services, the building is run at arm's length from the council, by a trust established in 1999.

### Orkney Arts Forum and community planning

VISION: An Orkney where we all have a place within a caring community, living in a healthy environment and supported by a thriving economy.

MISSION: To ensure that local organisations work together and with communities to improve the quality of people's lives, provide better services, and create a shared vision for the future to which we can all subscribe

*Orkney 2020: Our Vision, Orkney's Community Plan 2007-2020*

If culture in Orkney has been characterised by grass roots development, in contrast to Shetland's central delivery model, that does not mean that it has been unplanned, at least not in the past decade. On the contrary, there have been two three-year planning cycles and a third is currently being undertaken.

The introduction of this planning process is due to Orkney Islands Council, which by 2001 had recognised the need for a more coordinated approach to arts development in the county. Under the chairmanship of Cllr. Roderick MacLeod, and with the support of HI~Arts and Scottish Arts Council, OIC invited representatives of various cultural sectors to establish Orkney Arts Forum. This was, and remains, an unconstituted body without legal status, powers or funds – a typically Orcadian approach that has worked well because it does have legitimacy and therefore authority. Its legitimacy derives partly from the backing of Orkney Islands Council and partly from the democratic relationship between the artform representatives and the people who elect them. Its authority comes from the expertise of its members, who also include major cultural organisations, and the informed quality of its work.

The original task of the Arts Forum was to commission and oversee an audit of the arts in Orkney, which was published in 2002 and followed by a three-year arts strategy; an external consultant, Bryan Beattie, undertook both pieces of work. Perhaps the most important single outcome of this process was the appointment of the Council's first arts officer, funded by OIC, Orkney Enterprise and the Scottish Arts

Council. Not surprisingly perhaps, given past practice, the focus of the new post was not on service delivery but coordination and supporting the sector as a whole.

Following Clare Gee's appointment in 2004, Orkney Arts Forum was reconvened with a new remit as an advisory body for the arts officer and to work with her in contributing to the Community Plan. This link between culture and community planning is a key aspect of Orkney's approach, which has successfully embedded culture within a wider developmental agenda. As a result, the community plan adopted in 2007 and intended to provide a vision looking towards 2020 makes culture one of eight priority themes, alongside health, transport, the economy and learning. Who, among those who established the St Magnus Festival and the Pier Arts Centre 30 years earlier, expected that?

### 3.6.2 Professionalisation

It is not just Orkney Islands Council and the other public and private institutions active in the county that have changed as a result of this embedding of culture since the 1970s. The cultural sector itself has changed just as much during those years.

*'Had a professional director been imported from south, I can't think that it would have worked – at that time. Now, of course, that's working perfectly fine'*

The reopening of the Pier Arts Centre in 2007 is symbolic of the wider evolution of Orkney's artistic life since the 1970s. Stromness now has a visual arts centre as fine as it could wish, presenting work that compares well with – and is sometimes the same as – what could be seen in other European galleries, but in a warehouse used by the Hudson's Bay Company, bridging sea and street. Margaret Gardiner's gift provided a focus for Orkney artists to exhibit and connect. It grew with them over that generation, becoming steadily more ambitious and more effective – in a word, more professional. A similar process of professionalisation can be seen in the St Magnus Festival, which has become one of a handful of UK festivals that set the standard to which others aspire. In fact Orkney's culture life today is highly professional, as may be seen in the Folk and Science Festivals, galleries such as Northlight (Stromness) and Wheeling Steen (Westray), The Reel in Kirkwall, the Craft Trail, Papay Giro Nights and many other private and voluntary sector arts organisations.

Of course, the professionalisation of arts and cultural organisations since the 1970s is not a specifically Orcadian phenomenon. It happened everywhere, as culture's economic, social and symbolic importance grew along with the proportion of our resources it engaged. Orkney's artists and their allies seem to have handled this professionalisation rather well, partly because they held onto their voluntary and community culture. As a result, there is a sense that ultimate control of each organisation remains where it should: with trustees, staff, volunteers, supporters and audiences. External funding allowed people to be more ambitious and fulfil their potential, but it has never entirely controlled any organisation.

*'When we were first here, you knitted a jumper and you took it in and you got a tenner, cash in hand, and the workshop would just write down "knitters" and nobody ever said anything about it. But of course that's all tightened up now and knitters have to be self-employed and do books and you have to account for every last penny.'*

One sometimes senses nostalgia for the days when things could be and were done on a shoestring, when permissions were neither sought nor needed, when people achieved so much partly because they did not know how difficult it could be. But there are also those who recognise that sometimes things were ‘run a little bit as a small club’ with all the good and bad that implies.

What is important here is that the period when so much of Orkney’s present cultural life was established was before the arts had adopted the professional culture they have today. As a result, it was easier for people simply to do things – as Orcadians have always done – because they needed doing.

*‘The job was never advertised, as it would have to be nowadays; it was just a job that I was doing [voluntarily] and then there’d been funding to release me to do it on a part-time basis. So I just kind of drifted into the job. Had I had to apply for it and been in competition with other people I may well not have got it.’*

In those early days, the absence of professionals willing and able to work as arts administrators in Orkney, and the lack of funds to pay them, meant that things depended on local enthusiasm. Teachers, bank managers, business people, tradesmen, community activists and parents: they applied the skills and experience gained in other fields to creating the cultural programmes they wanted to see happen. Lack of funding also meant that there was no institution to require them to work in any particular way, while regulation – for instance in licensing or health and safety – was lighter in the 1970s than it is today.

If in the end Orkney’s cultural organisations have gained more than they’ve lost through professionalisation, it is because of their roots in a self-reliant society, which, like a farmer, treats a good harvest as a godsend rather than something to be relied upon: save what you can, because next summer might be bad. But the question arises whether the professionalisation of cultural life during the past 30 years would present greater obstacles to a start-up voluntary project today than it once did. Those who set standards, often with sound reasons, must be sensitive to the risk of putting obstacles in the way of the kind of community activism that is politically fashionable and which is such a strength of Orkney society.



Kirbuster Farm Museum, August 2011

## 3.7 SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

### 3.7.1 Differences and similarities

The sectors described here have much in common and some defining differences, and it is worth reflecting on those, starting with what is distinctive about each group.

#### **Heritage, museums and archaeology**

- This sector is centred on physical assets of recognised historical value. Their nature and the legal controls, make this the least flexible field of culture.
- Heritage assets exist or they do not (although, like the military remains, they may not always be recognised as such); they cannot be moved or, in many cases, disposed of; a complicated body of regulation governs their management and use.
- Their economic exploitation requires considerable investment and the scope for efficiency savings is limited by the constraints just mentioned.
- Their economic potential is important – evident in the number of tourists drawn to Orkney specifically by its archaeology – but few are directly or independently commercially viable: i.e. only the most famous sites or museums can earn enough to cover their operation, let alone the high costs of conservation.
- In short, these are outstanding assets in Orkney's cultural ecology that attract thousands of wealthy tourists each year but they require investment whose benefits largely do not return directly to them.

#### **Festivals and performing arts**

- This sector is the most seasonal part of Orkney's cultural economy, relatively invisible to most people, except when it is happening.
- It is absolutely time-sensitive: its products are experiences in the present that cannot be stocked and resold later.
- It is financially high-risk, since factors beyond the organisers' control (bad weather, volcanic ash) can have a devastating impact on attendances and on the bottom line.
- It is particularly reliant on the knowledge, skills and experience of volunteers, as well as on their hard work and goodwill.
- It is the most obviously social aspect of local culture, creating regular but varied opportunities for people to meet and spend time together.

#### **Visual arts and crafts**

- This sector is in some ways the most diverse, since it embraces sole traders and SMEs that are substantial employers.
- Its range includes not just commercial businesses, but also people that do not expect – and sometimes do not want – to earn their living through their art.
- It is not an easy sector to bring together because of the large number of individuals who may see little interest or benefit in working with others.
- It offers consumer products through the year, in shops, galleries and studios.
- Its business model depends on the sale of objects, which has advantages in terms of distance retailing; on the other hand, the decision to buy is often made as a result of personal contact and it is difficult to monetise gallery visits.



### Shared characteristics

It is because each part of the cultural sector has distinctive aspects that they can form a cohesive ecology. Thus the drama and excitement of a festival complements the quieter pleasures of visiting craft shops; museums and prehistoric sites are in mute dialogue with contemporary art or folk music performances. But the ecology also works because of what the different parts of the cultural sector have in common.

- All parts of the cultural sector are driven by values and a belief in the societal or philosophical importance of their work, not just its economic value.
- Running a viable business enables that, but many artists prefer to work in a related field (such as teaching) rather than change their work to earn from it.
- Values also form the main attraction of the cultural sector's products and services, drawing audiences and customers; they are why people are prepared to give time (and more than time) as volunteers. People's commitment to shared values can be a very powerful force in developing cultural assets.
- Cultural businesses are generally efficient and enterprising, virtues that are forced on them by the need to make the best use of limited resources rather than innate talent.
- Each part of Orkney's cultural life plays a role in shaping its internal and external image, though there is limited awareness or coordination of this.

Taken together, these characteristics help to explain not only some of the differences within the cultural sector, but also some of the differences between the sector as a whole and the rest of Orkney's economy. They also help in understanding why much of the impact that can be ascribed to culture reaches so far beyond economic issues.

### 3.7.2 The impacts of Orkney's cultural life

Even in a small and relatively cohesive society such as Orkney's it would be a major undertaking to account for all the ways in which cultural activities have an impact on people's lives. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this study, but it may be helpful to conclude this section with a short summary of how Orkney is affected by the work of its culture professionals and their supporters.

Before doing so, however, it is important to note that there are substantial differences between what happens on Orkney Mainland (and the islands that are now connected to it by road) and the other islands that make up the county. These differences affect almost every aspect of life and there is no reason to expect culture to be different. The time and cost needed to get from Westray to Kirkwall, for example, means that the island's residents plan visits to the capital in advance and try to get enough business done to repay the effort. Given that an evening event requires an overnight stay, it is not surprising that none of the Westray residents I spoke to had attended an event at the St Magnus Festival, other than those occasionally promoted on the island.

From the opposite perspective, it also seems that relatively few of tourists venture beyond the Mainland: the 2009 Visitor Survey found that only 14% had used a ferry during their stay.<sup>87</sup> The islands do have lively cultures, as Hoy's Gable End Theatre

and the Sanday Soulkas show, but they are often more self-contained and while they produce similar outcomes they work differently to the Mainland.

### **Economic outcomes**

- Orkney's culture is a source of direct employment, through commercial businesses such as those in the craft and jewellery sectors and through charities and not-for profit organisations. Jobs are full-time, part-time and seasonal while there is also a great deal of freelance and self-employed work.
- The trading of Orkney's cultural businesses adds to economic activity in the Islands, while in Kirkwall, Stromness and some smaller centres cultural retailing is important. The festivals create peaks that bring additional business to the hospitality and transport industries, and benefit cultural retailers and freelance performers.
- Culture also contributes indirectly to the attractiveness of Orkney to visitors from Scotland, the UK and overseas. It is second only to the natural world in the marketing message used to bring tourists to the county.
- Just as importantly, in its products such as books, crafts and music, it tells stories of place beyond the promotional activity of VisitOrkney: detached from sales, this may be powerful in motivating people to come. Orkney's leading cultural organisations help shape its image abroad, for instance through broadcasts from the St Magnus Festival on BBC Radio 3 and the Orkney Folk Festival on BBC Radio Scotland.<sup>88</sup>
- All this contributes to the financial viability of cultural and other public services that might be hard to sustain in areas of low population.

### **Social outcomes**

- The ecology of Orcadian culture today is exceptionally dense, something that is characteristic of small communities. There are literally hundreds of formal and informal cultural groups, involved in everything from heritage, film screenings, music education, festivals, amateur drama, poetry and much more.
- These depend on and increase social capital (the enabling relationships between people) and so contribute to making Orkney society as cohesive and mutually supportive as it is.
- Cultural activity also provides relatively easy ways into local society for people who have moved to the islands, enabling to meet people, share skills and learn from others. It also creates shared experiences and memories that are at the heart of any sense of community.
- The involvement of volunteers on boards and in every practical aspect of cultural life means that the community invests a huge amount of time and goodwill in its cultural life. That in itself is evidence of how much it is valued by most people: even those who have no interest in classical music, Neolithic culture or contemporary art are generally proud and supportive of Orkney's assets.
- People have opportunities to gain new skills, experience and knowledge through participating in culture. They particularly value the contact with visitors, including the performers and other artists attracted to Orkney by the festivals.

- Orkney's rich cultural life is a particular asset for children and young people, who have a very wide range of opportunities to see, participate, learn and perform.
- The high standards evident in almost every aspect of the arts and culture in the county spring from and foster an aspirational spirit and high expectations.



Artists' residency Papdale School 2007, (Matilda Tumim & Chris Prendergast)

This sketch cannot do justice to all the ways that the arts, crafts, heritage and other cultural activity influence Orkney's community, but it gives a general picture. The cultural sector as a whole is central to Orkney's social and economic life and to its attractiveness to visitors and those who choose to live there. It is hard to imagine the successful, confident and prosperous Orkney of today without its cultural life.

## 4 Fables: Imagining Orkney's culture

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The vision by which people live, what Edwin Muir called their Fable.

George Mackay Brown, *An Orkney Tapestry* (1969)<sup>89</sup>

### 4.1 IMAGINING ORKNEY

There are other ways of knowing the world, such as through the image, the glimpse and the word.

Andrew Greig, *At the Loch of the Green Corrie* (2010)<sup>90</sup>

#### The limits of rationality

The factual story of Orkney's recent cultural development, at least as far as it can be reconstructed in the space available, was the focus of the preceding pages. Its importance needs no justification in a culture that places as high a value on scientific method as Britain now does. But science is not humanity's only way of knowing: if it were, we would not have artists or value them as much as we do. And reason is not the only factor that influences people's actions: if it were – well, as Andrew Greig has written, 'If thinking got us anywhere, we'd all be enlightened beings by now'.<sup>91</sup>

Orkney's cultural development has not been shaped by conscious, rational decision-making. For instance, low property prices in the 1970s and 1980s meant that the cost of living as an artist was less than in many other parts of the UK. These factors are not very difficult to identify or to understand: people tend to offer such explanations readily in reflecting on their experiences. But other forces, less obvious, less conscious and less explicable, have also shaped Orkney's culture. For example, Orcadians often see themselves as self-reliant islanders, but with a strong commitment to mutual assistance.

The farmers did not know ambition and the petty torments of ambition: they did not realise what competition was, though they lived at the end of Queen Victoria's reign; they helped one another with their work when help was required, following the old usage.

Edwin Muir, *The Story & The Fable* (1940)<sup>92</sup>

Interviewees frequently evoked Muir's vision of a resilient but supportive community, though without mentioning him directly. It was not necessary to do so, even if they knew his account of childhood on Wyre, because they held a shared idea of what Orkney people are or should be: what Muir would have called a fable.

In using this term, I do not undervalue the idea or suggest that it is not true. On the contrary: the fables we tell ourselves, individually and collectively, are often ways of expressing and enacting profound beliefs that shape how we behave. They may not be scientifically true – how could we test whether Wyre's farmers in the past or even today escape 'the petty torments of ambition'? But they become true when they are believed and enacted as true.

These ideas, these half-conscious fables we breathe in daily, make people and communities different from each other not just in abstract ideas of identity or values but also in everyday behaviour. If someone expects to be self-reliant because those around them expect it, they will *be* more self-reliant. It takes a stubborn or insensitive person to ignore the social conventions that require everyone to lend a hand, so mutual support becomes a self-affirming norm.



**'The Guide is definitive. Reality is frequently inaccurate.'**<sup>93</sup>

Fables are true, but their truths are different, like the truths of art. They are not capable of proof or disproof: indeed the application of these scientific concepts to fables would be a category error. Thus, if someone says he chooses to live in Orkney because he finds the Highlands tainted by a deep historical sadness (as one person did), there is no point in taking issue with this view, though one may feel differently. If someone evokes Orkney's extraordinary light, the objective fact of long winter nights is irrelevant: even in the darkness, they hold the summer light in mind.

These ideas are not only personal and therefore obviously subjective: many people may hold them as the foundations of a shared culture. The idea that Orkney is an egalitarian society, which was often said by interviewees, may be testable, but only up to a point. And if statistics did show that it was not more equal than other parts of the United Kingdom, would that change how people felt? Hardly, because what is being expressed is an ideal, and it is in stating and acting on beliefs that we make the world what it is. Fables are important because they hold and transmit our interpretations of experience, what we believe to be true or right, and what we hope for and desire. All that has a profound influence on our actions.

This part of the report therefore attempts to account for Orkney's cultural development differently from the factual story set out already. It is not an alternative to that story, which is true and important, but a complementary account that may help explain *why* some of the things described so far have happened as they have.

It is based largely on what Orcadians and others have said in interviews and in public meetings as they have reflected on their experiences, work, society, culture and history. Orkney's success is inextricably linked to these intangible factors. While many are specific and could not be translated elsewhere, others might be adapted and built on. Either way, reflecting on some the underlying causes of what has happened in Orkney may help others elsewhere to consider what factors – what fables – may be influencing the story of culture in their own communities.



## 4.2 FACTORS THAT HAVE SHAPED ORKNEY'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 4.2.1 A rich inheritance

Out of an incontrovertible physical and geographical reality emerges a clearly delineable and authoritative cultural space. [...] As well as being real rock, sea and soil, Orkney has become an imaginary archipelago in a sea of texts.

Simon Hall, *The History of Orkney Literature* (2011)<sup>94</sup>

#### Farmers with boats

Orkney has some physical advantages compared to the Western Isles and Shetland. The first may be seen in any atlas: the archipelago is clustered into a group rather than being strung out in a line. Island travel is always a challenge and although travel on Mainland Orkney may be somewhat easier than in the other island groups, this is not the point. Rather it is symbolic: Orkney's islands face one another, clustering together in open seas like a circled wagon train on a Western plain. They watch, and watch over, one another.



The northern and western fringes of Europe are still considered by many to be our culture's last local frontiers in terms of both resources and development. My Orkney upbringing, and Oil Town further education, often remind me how fragile and limited many of these resources are. At the same time my childhood perpetually reinforced the frontier-like qualities of the Highland and Island existence.

Colin Kirkpatrick, Interview for Peacock Arts Aberdeen (2006)<sup>95</sup>

At a more down to earth level, Orkney is also more fertile than much of the Highlands and Islands. It is striking to cross the wilderness of Sutherland and Caithness before sailing into Stromness harbour past green and golden fields. Orkney's good land encouraged lairds like the Balfours of Shapinsay to invest in agricultural improvements and allowed tenants, over the past couple of centuries, to buy out their landlords. In comparison with other parts of the Highlands, there is little crofting in Orkney. This agricultural prosperity has nurtured a society with a substantial, independent and enterprising middle class. All social groups create their own cultures but not all have the resources – leisure time, money and education – to develop those cultures. The advantages of agricultural surplus have become, in Orkney, advantages of cultural surplus.



Shapinsay Heritage Centre, August 2011

### Norn for 'multum in parvo'<sup>96</sup>

Orkney's geography also creates a powerful proximity. Its shared Westminster constituency with Shetland is the second smallest in the country: only the Western Isles has fewer electors. The MP for the Isle of Wight, by contrast, represents over 110,000 electors at Westminster, three times as many as the Orkney and Shetland constituency. It would be politically unacceptable to put Orkney into a constituency with a third of the highland region, which is what it would take to balance the Isle of Wight. So Orkney has avoided the fate of Rutland (motto, 'multum in parvo' or much in little), which was amalgamated with Leicestershire in 1974; its 38,000 residents fought for 20 years to regain county status.

Orkney is a whole, divided or enlarged with great difficulty. As a consequence, it must have resources that could not otherwise be secured by any community of 20,000: its own education service, its hospital, its airport, MP and MSP, its own festivals and arts venues etc.. Orkney people, even those who live in North Ronaldsay or Westray, are closer to key services and facilities than many people in much larger settlements elsewhere.

*'I phoned and then called in on the then Director of Education and said 'What about if I do a number of writing sessions in the school?'. I was amazed how informal this was – I didn't have to make an appointment and see barrages of secretaries and assistants: I just walked in his office and he said, "Oh, have a cup of tea".'*

That proximity is effective in enabling access to people. The story reported above is one of many similar encounters described in the conversations for this study. People certainly didn't always accept the proposals put to them but it is remarkable how easy it is to speak to people in positions of authority in Orkney.

### Maritime crossroads

Those who live in a big island - such as Great Britain - imagine the sea as a moat, protecting the land. But where there is less land and more sea, the perspective shifts and the water becomes as important as the earth: a source of food, wealth, trade and, above all, meetings, interactions enabled by the relative ease of travel. Pull back from Orkney and see its islands in the world: they are stepping-stones. Mariners have stopped here for millennia on their way somewhere else, finding shelter, food, fresh water and trade.

Your door stood open wide  
 From the rising of the lark  
 To the pole of the night, to all men,  
 William and Mareon Clark

George Mackay Brown, 'William and Mareon Clark, The First Innkeepers in Hamnavoe', (1983)

As a maritime meeting place, Orkney has also had military value. Now it is important to the energy industry. Its own people have gone out across the world, in longships, with the Hudson's Bay Company and in trawlers. All this has produced a historic coming and going of people: Orcadians leaving, outsiders arriving; islanders coming home, incomers setting off again. Many of those who came and went, or came and stayed, have left a mark on the islands, like the Italian prisoners of war who endowed Orkney with one of its best-loved sites. Orkney's culture – and this is discussed at greater length below – is essentially the product of interactions between Orcadians and outsiders.



Italian Chapel, Lamb Holm, (Wikipedia)<sup>97</sup>

### 7000 years of history

'This whole feeling of the place being part of a legend - something that is alive in people's minds, is part of a great continuum and ritualises the everyday life of the islands.'

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, *The Guardian*, 2004<sup>98</sup>

Orkney's position, fertility, good harbours and mild climate (for the North) have drawn many peoples to it over the millennia. As a consequence its culture has some of the deepest roots found in Europe. Its earliest inhabitants left moving traces of their cultures in the sites that attract so many visitors today. And each succeeding generation has responded and added to its unique inheritance so that today's inhabitants live surrounded by the legacy of every age. Might that influence the curious mixture of pride and humility one encounters among Orcadians – pride in belonging to a place older than pyramids and humility in the knowledge that one is only the current custodian of ancient land? It must be difficult to get too self-important surrounded by the traces of so many who have been there before and whose concerns, once so urgent, are faded from memory. Orkney's writers and artists have been very alive to its past cultures. Some, George Mackay Brown above all, are equally sensitive to this paradoxical sense of permanence and transience.

### Nordic Scots

The government must recognise that people in Orkney are fiercely proud of our own distinctive linguistic, historic and cultural heritage, derived from our Nordic roots.

Liam McArthur, MSP for Orkney, 10 October 2011<sup>99</sup>

There is almost no part of Orkney's history that has not left its trace, but few are more symbolic today than the period under Norwegian rule. Although the Earldom has been a county in the Scots realm since 1468, when it was pledged as surety for a never-to-be-paid dowry of 50,000 florins<sup>100</sup>, its people retain a strong sense of separateness from the rest of Scotland. The visitor familiar with other Scottish tourist centres cannot but notice the scarcity of tartan in Kirkwall's shops. The high quality offer of Orkney jewellers, weavers, potters and artists is not just a distinctive asset for Orkney; it also has the effect of leaving little space for mass-produced souvenirs.

Language is another area where the distinction is felt particularly. Norn may no longer be spoken, but it has left its traces in place names, dialect and literature: there has been a revival in dialect poetry in recent years. Gaelic, on the other hand, is very little spoken here: in 2001, about 0.5% of Orcadians knew the language, compared to 24% in Islay, 38% in Skye and 58% in Lewis and Harris.<sup>101</sup> The difference was often brought up by interviewees and is reflected in the local MSP's response to the Scottish Government's draft Gaelic Language Plan cited above.

One consequence of Orkney's distinctiveness within Scotland may have been to make it a more approachable part of the country to non-Scots. Some people spoke of finding it easier to find a place where identity, while very strongly held, is also detached from both majority nationalism and minority heritage. This relative ease of finding routes to belonging may partly account for the high proportion of Orkney residents who were not born in Scotland.



Orkney Folk Festival (Tom O'Brien, Orkney Media Group)

#### 4.2.2 A capacity for nurturing talent

The winter gathered us into one room as it gathered the cattle into the stable and the byre; the sky came closer; the lamps were lit at three or four in the afternoon, and then the great evening lay before us like a world: an evening filled with talk, stories, games, music and lamplight.

Edwin Muir. *The Story & The Fable* (1940)<sup>102</sup>

### Orcadian talent

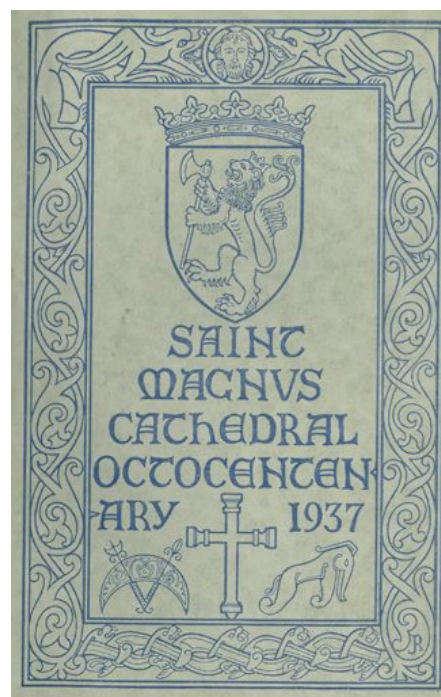
Edwin Muir, Stanley Cursiter, Ola Gorie, Robert Rendell, Margaret Tait, George Mackay Brown, Sylvia Wishart, Sheila Fleet – there is no need to go on, or to embarrass younger artists by adding their names to the roll of Orkney’s talented children. Orkney has produced a remarkable number of gifted artists, writers, designers and musicians – more, in so far as such comparisons can be made – than most remote places with a few thousand inhabitants. But even without making comparisons, it is evident that Orkney has no shortage of natural talent in the arts.

There is no reason why the Orcadian gene pool should produce more artistically gifted babies than any other. Human beings everywhere are born with potential. What makes the difference is how that potential is nurtured and developed – whether or not it grows in fertile soil. There are at least two ways in which Orkney nurtures its young (and older) talent. The first is a virtue of necessity. As islanders, Orcadians are accustomed to a high degree of self-reliance. If you need something, you make it; if it breaks, you fix it. If you want a dance, you organise it – and so on. From entertainment in long winter evenings to today’s festivals, soulkas and shows, there’s an expectation that everyone contributes their talent. Being involved, playing an instrument, acting, making, or just helping with the heavy lifting, is normal.

*‘Everybody does it, you know; their parents do it, and where their parents don’t do it, their uncles do it or their aunts do it.’*

That presumption of competence is evident throughout Orkney society, not just in the arts. So when artists have needed help or support, there has been no shortage of people willing and able to give it, either because of their belief in an individual or for the good of the community. There is another roll call of names – one might include Archie Bevan, Jean Leonard, Josh Gourlay, Marjorie Linklater, Graham Bevan, George Rendell, Howie Firth, Gavin Cullen or any number of others – that is less known than that of the artists, but not less important. They may not be commemorated with plaques in St Magnus Cathedral, but without their work those who are would not have achieved so much.

Secondly, parents expect their children to do well. Partly, that’s the legacy of a poor place, where each generation is working so that their children will have a better life. But it goes deeper, perhaps because of Orkney’s openness to the world. Parents naturally hope to keep children close by, but they also expect and want them to do well, even if that means leaving Orkney. In the past, leaving Orkney has indeed been synonymous with doing well. This high expectation of what youngsters should achieve is shared by incomers, many of whom



Orkney Archives (D23/28/23)



come to Orkney precisely because they see it as a good place to bring up a family, with high educational standards. Parents are generally more willing to facilitate that learning, by driving them to and from class or session.

*‘The culture’s changing from a country culture to a town culture. Now parents are much more willing to run their kids about and younger ones are more aware of what’s going on. They’re far more keen to get their children involved; for the previous generation, it wasn’t a concern of theirs at all – they wanted to get the crops in.’*



Welding at Orkney Out There event 2011

There are also now far more opportunities for young people to learn arts skills in Orkney than in the 1970s, in both formal and informal settings. This is true across Scotland, but young people in Orkney, far from being cut off by their remoteness, probably have better access than their peers elsewhere. Few towns of 20,000 in the central belt have anything like the same facilities and access to visiting artists enjoyed by young people at Kirkwall Grammar School or Stromness Academy. They might be geographically further from Glasgow than their peers in Motherwell but Orcadian children probably have better access to the arts and culture.

*‘The opportunities that come out of the St Magnus Festival and the National Theatre of Scotland coming up are the exceptional things. [...] I think it’s a concentration of opportunity that makes that difference.’*

Add to this high expectation and encouragement, the fact that your teacher probably knows your mum, and everyone knows who you are, and taking the opportunities that are available and doing your best, may be the easier road. Orkney may not produce more creative and talented youngsters than anywhere else, but it has a concentration of facilities, organisations and activities (the proximity mentioned already), matched with a culture of competence and expectation, that gives its talented people exceptional opportunities to thrive and fulfil their potential.

That doesn’t mean that growing up in Orkney is always paradise. There are plenty of teenagers and young adults who feel stifled and want to try themselves in a bigger world where no one knows their mother. That desire to test oneself in a bigger sea is very natural, especially among ambitious creative people. University provides a

natural platform for that and one in three school leavers takes that route. Orkney does seem successful at bringing at least some of its children home, though, and several people contributed to the study who had returned to the islands after years away, valuing in maturity what they disliked in youth.

*'My enthusiasm for Orkney has emerged only gradually after my return. I was like many young Orcadians, in that I could not wait to leave here and return only for visits. My slightly anti feelings and critical views have changed over the years into a serious affection for what this community has to offer.'*



David Holmes, Potter studio, Shapinsay, August 2011

### Talent from elsewhere

*'If you come here and you're going to stay, it's at the cost of – at the merit of – taking on some of the fundamental values of the place. Otherwise you wouldn't stay.'*

Orkney's cultural life includes many people not born in the county who are active as artists, musicians, managers, teachers, trustees, volunteers and more. Mostly, that inclusion is warm, respectful and generous on both sides and people are sometimes surprised to learn that someone is not an Orkney native. In everyday life origin is not made an issue, although there are sensitivities beneath the surface on both sides.

The question of people not born in Scotland, especially the English, moving to live there is fraught with tensions, ambiguities and inconsistencies that don't need to be rehearsed here. The phrase 'white settlers' has been used to express antagonism, but interestingly, Orkney has its own term of longstanding – 'ferry loupers' – whose gentler tone suggests a difference in attitude.<sup>103</sup> The issue was raised in some of the discussion groups, usually by people who had moved to Orkney, but in the ensuing debates people went out of their way to avoid giving offence. One person, born and brought up in the county to incomer parents, spoke powerfully of the hostility they had sometimes experienced at school and were still conscious of as an adult; while not unique, such comments were unusual. Perhaps Orcadian politeness kept others away from saying more on either side of the debate.

It is true that not all incomers are equally welcome. Those who want to make everything conform to an ideal of what island life, or who believe they know better than those who have spent their lives in Orkney, do test local patience. Those who hope island life will sort out their personal problems rarely stay long. And because people don't always last more than a winter or two, those for whom Orkney is home

are sometimes cautious about investing too much too soon in new friendships. You need to know someone's staying before you decide to count on them.

*'People who come up here because they find it difficult being with people – they can't last here, because the one thing you have to be able to do here is do people. I walk down the street to get a pint of milk, I'm gonna meet half a dozen people that I know, and even if I'm not in the mood, I can't cut them dead.'*

To balance that, conversations with artists and others who have moved to Orkney have consistently stressed the friendliness and warmth that greeted them. With all these caveats, Orkney has attracted and retained more outsiders than most Scottish islands, creating in the process a different society but also one able to call on new skills, talents, ideas and energy. It is striking also how often its cultural life has been forged from that coming together of local and incomer.

### A culture in dialogue



Stromness Open Windows, May 2011

*'As part of the entertainment in Stromness for the Tall Ships, there was a small stage for local musicians. In the space of an hour we heard English folk songs, a 12 year old boy playing blazing blues trumpet, and lively fiddle music. The Pipe band played later. There seems a confidence and ease in this complete mix of local and incoming culture that is almost wholly absent in the rest of the Highlands and Islands.'*

There is a well-known photograph of George Mackay Brown and Peter Maxwell Davies taken on the afternoon of their first meeting. They sit in folding garden chairs, backs against a rough wall, glass of beer to hand. The composer is looking straight to the camera; the poet looks sideways at his new friend. It would be impossible to say who looks more pleased at their meeting.

The photograph is historically important because of all that happened as a result of that meeting. It is also an iconic image that captures something of how these men - wittingly, willingly, both or neither - transmitted a cultural image of Orkney as powerfully attractive as the Bilbao Guggenheim. But most of all, it is symbolic of something deeper and older about Orkney and its culture: the interaction between insider and outsider, resident and visitor, farmer and sailor.

Orkney's culture has grown through the interactions of Orcadians and visitors: both the Pier and St Magnus Festival show this pattern. This may be the single most important thing about it: the culture is a product of exchange, dialogue and collaboration. The islands have developed a useful habit of openness towards visitors who are welcomed and given a chance to show what they can contribute.

There is a down side. One or two Orkney artists suggested that being from elsewhere was a distinct advantage when it came to winning bursaries and commissions from some of the islands' institutions. There was, they suggested, always the suspicion that somebody living in Orkney wouldn't be as good, as exciting, as important as somebody new from afar. The lure of unfamiliarity is real, but so is confidence in what you know. An artist moving to Orkney also wondered whether they would find everything 'stitched up' and if there would be a place for an outsider. Mostly, the doubts on both sides seem to be misplaced.



Writers' Retreat on Hoy

### Why Orkney?

There are several possible explanations for Orkney's receptiveness to outsiders. First, as has been said, it is used to incomers. Having lived with over 50,000 service personnel during the war, the numbers of people moving north in the past 30 years is a small upheaval. Secondly, Orkney does not have a sense of itself as protecting a threatened culture: even George Mackay Brown, for all his railing against progress – 'portable transistors are one of the worst inventions of our time'<sup>104</sup> – writes of a world that has passed, if it ever existed, not to defend it but to remind his readers of the inner life he thought mattered. Dialect, folk music, storytelling and other traditions are valued but, so far, they have not been excessively romanticised or drawn into a particular political narrative.

All rural and island communities have experienced massive social change in recent decades, but in Orkney it has come from a very wide range of directions: oil, the military, farming, tourism, social values, culture, renewables, fishing, incomers and much, much more. Perhaps the evident complexity of those influences discourages Orcadians from ascribing it to a single cause, such as the new neighbours among them. Indeed, listening to older residents, those who remember Orkney before fast roads and colour television, one gets a sense that change is just something you have to get on with, even though there are things you might regret.

It is the visibility of some incomers - what they actually do or say - that matters, rather than their existence *per se*.

E. Mairi MacArthur, 'White Settlers', *Scottish Affairs*, no.22, 1998

Orkney generally welcomes those who come for its community, its people and its values, those who want to contribute to rather than change its way of life, those for whom the light, the landscape and the archaeology are wonderful, but not without the people. They are, after all, paying Orcadians a handsome compliment in choosing to live among them, of all the places in the world.

#### 4.2.3 Self-reliance and solidarity

##### **Can do, will do: an enterprising culture**

The idea of self-reliance has already been touched on. It is certainly important to Orkney's self-image as an industrious, capable community, an idea that was often raised in the study's discussions. And it is evident that Orkney's cultural success has relied on a high degree of both personal commitment and competence from many of those involved. Events and organisations have been founded on the enthusiasm of individuals or small groups of like-minded people. They have grown and overcome obstacles because of the determined capability of those people, who have been willing not just to invest time, effort and imagination, but to stick with it through dark seasons as well as sunny ones. Commitment is different to the passion that the arts world often likes to see as its defining characteristic. It is more rational, more determined and more methodical. When it is backed with skills and an adaptable approach to do things, it becomes powerful.

Orkney's cultural facilities, events and organisations have developed essentially without planning or coordination. Individual groups have planned their activities but there has been no centralised oversight. The Pier Arts Centre, the St Magnus Festival, the jewellery industry, the Tomb of the Eagles, the craft trail, the Folk Festival: none of these owes its creation to decisions made in Edinburgh, Inverness or Kirkwall. On the contrary, they are all independent, grass roots initiatives, like most of Orkney's cultural life and assets. They have typically come about when a few friends have decided to make something happen because they thought it should. Orkney's self-reliant and cooperative spirit has been at work.

As a result, public bodies, such as Orkney Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise or the Scottish Arts Council/Creative Scotland, have been in an essentially responsive position to developments led by people in the voluntary and private sectors. But many of Orkney's cultural organisations thrive without any direct support from these or other public bodies, existing only because of fundraising and voluntary effort.

##### **Volunteering**

Volunteers are highly valued members of the staff team and treated on an equal footing. One volunteer simply said that her involvement had 'saved her life', giving her focus and meaning following bereavement.

Orkney Library Service<sup>105</sup>

Volunteering is a cornerstone of Orkney's cultural life, not only in the islands' informal and community activities where that would be expected, but also in the work of most professional organisations and events. Even the Library and Archive Service depends on volunteers to extend its work, particularly in areas such as local and family history; in 2009/10, its volunteers gave 425 hours support.<sup>106</sup> People giving their time, skills and expertise adds huge value to the work of many organisations: indeed, much of Orkney's cultural life simply would not be possible without that commitment.



But it has value far beyond its invisible economic contribution. The involvement of so many people creates a priceless local commitment, extending networks across the community, so that people turn out for events partly because they know someone who is involved. The contact networks are invaluable in getting help and solving problems. Above all, perhaps, they help to create a culture held in common, where the boundaries between producer and consumer, artist and audience, are fluid and allow people not just to feel a vague sense of ownership but often to own a real share in local cultural life.

While volunteering brings many benefits to individuals and to the community as a whole, it can also place big demands on individuals, as has been mentioned in relation to the St Magnus Festival (3.3.1 above). These positions also place people in the social spotlight, something that reticent Orcadians in particular may not enjoy. For many, this is a matter of time and effort, but for those in positions of leadership – such as the board members of festivals or community development trusts – there are financial and legal responsibilities. Many feel that bureaucracy is increasing, with licences required for everything from screening films to having a procession, and that the charges imposed are unjustified.

*‘The theatre here has suffered recently from more licencing restraints, more health and safety restraints, more people wanting money for doing nothing and these things add up and make it very difficult for a small community to have a cultural life.’*

The Sanday Soulkas show both what a group of active people can achieve within a small community, with some external financial support, and the costs involved. Meeting some of those behind the event towards the end of the summer, I heard both the pride at what had been achieved but also the demands placed on people. There was enthusiasm for sustaining the festival but apprehension about what was involved. In the context of community planning, local people mentioned the pressures on volunteers to run cultural activities and this clearly remains a concern for many people in Orkney.<sup>107</sup>

### **Egalitarianism and self-effacement**

One of the curious things about discussing success with Orcadians is their repeated insistence on deflecting any credit. Time and again, I spoke to people who played down their own contribution and named others as the true instigators, champions and heroes. It made for some very attractive conversations, but such humility is unusual. In other research, I have observed people subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, competing for recognition of their part in what has been achieved: seeking appreciation is, after all, very natural. So why are Orcadians so different in this respect?

The answer may be associated with another idea that was continually raised: the belief in Orkney as an egalitarian society that disapproves of anyone who wants to be more important than his neighbours. People should not push themselves forward, expect special attention, or make claims of distinction. Scotland’s social democratic values – which are one of its differences with England – are very evident in Orkney.



Instrumental tuition course, May 2009

These values could be seen in summer 2011, when budget constraints led the Council to propose introducing fees for children receiving instrumental tuition and a lively public debate ensued. A Council consultation undertaken in September 2011 attracted 459 submissions – a 64% response rate, which suggests a strong degree of engagement. The subject was also raised in the interviews for this study, by people concerned about the risk of excluding children from less well-off families. The commitment to a fair cultural life, in which the whole community is equally able to participate, runs deep.

### Managing disagreement

*'They've learnt to limit or control disagreements, strife and struggling over resources, because they've been struggling over resources since the year dot. They seem to have found ways of living with that because the alternative is just chaos.'*

People fall out everywhere, especially where resources – as they are for arts and culture in Orkney – are limited. One must assume that Orcadians disagree about as much as folk do elsewhere. But tales of past or present disputes were unusual in the study interviews. Some of that can be ascribed to politeness and not washing dirty linen in front of a foreign consultant. But in my other studies, neither factor has prevented disagreements about which people felt strongly from being aired. Nor is it uncommon to see arts and voluntary organisations riven by divisions or be highly critical of local competitors. Yet there is little evidence of this in Orkney's cultural sector: so what is different?

Disagreements do occur, but they seem to be quite skilfully managed. They are not allowed to build into major public rows that push people into positions from which they cannot retreat without losing face. This may just be an aspect of island life: you're going to see the same people week after week, so you need to keep on reasonably good terms. But insofar as it has prevented the draining struggles that can waste the energy of community organisations, it has been a real asset.

A cooperative spirit does not mean that there is no competition. There are rivalries within Orkney – between Kirkwall and Stromness, between Mainland and isles – but the sense of community shared by most islanders most of the time means that

their very real competitive spirit is more naturally directed towards the obvious, external rivals: Shetland and, to a lesser extent, the Western Isles or Scotland itself. Sometimes, for instance in traditional music or funding, Shetland is still seen to do better, but generally Orkney's cultural activists feel confident of their own achievements. There is notwithstanding a desire for cultural eminence, at least among Scotland's islands and perhaps within the nation itself – an element of competition that helps mitigate any risk of complacency arising from past achievements.



Orkney Folk Festival (Tom O'Brien, Orkney Media Group)

#### 4.2.4 High standards and expectations

*'Orkney's totally unique, there's nowhere else like it in the UK, as far as language and cultural heritage and natural heritage and archaeology is concerned; you'll find few places of a similar square mileage with the variety that we have here.'*

Many Orkney people are both diffident about and proud of the community's culture, its external reputation and its achievements. As a result, they have high expectations of what they do, organise and promote, but do not take it for granted that those expectations will be easily achieved. The enthusiastic individuals who have shaped Orkney's cultural life have been driven by their love of writing, classical music, contemporary art or traditional culture. Their work has been its own end, so there has been little willingness to compromise its standards. If it were being done principally to attract tourists or develop the economy, its artistic ambitions might have taken a secondary importance. As things are, the highest artistic standards have led and everything else has followed. Those standards have brought Orkney's arts organisations external recognition far in excess of what might be expected from a place of this size. The latest instance is the MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Award for 'Event of the Year', won by Orkney Folk Festival in December 2011.<sup>108</sup>

### 4.3 GOOD LUCK

In addition to these assets and factors, Orkney has had a deal of good luck. It not only has a very attractive image, it has had exceptional artists capable of communicating that image and so attracting visitors and new inhabitants. It has had access to resources, both internally and externally, and it was ready to do things at a time when the wider conditions were very favourable.

#### An attractive image

*'Someone gave me a volume of George's poems, and I loved it. It created a whole universe, and I thought – even though I take it as a work of poetic imagination – to some extent, it has a grounding in a real life.'*

Orkney has benefitted from the advocacy of exceptional artists whose work has given it a powerful and attractive image. The obvious example is George Mackay Brown, cited by many incomers and visitors as their first encounter with Orkney. But at other times and in different ways, the work of Edwin Muir, Eric Linklater, Stanley Currier, Ola Gorie and others have spread an idea of Orkney to people living far away; today, that role is fulfilled, intentionally or not, by another generation.

The St Magnus Festival, whose concerts have been so regularly broadcast by the BBC, also contributed to the islands' image as a place where exceptionally good things happened. Even 25 years ago, one musician was being asked at her conservatoire interviews about her school experiences there:

*"What did you do in the St Magnus Festival? What things have you done there? What's that like?" Folk were very intrigued to know.'*

Today, organisations like the Folk Festival and individual writers, artists and musicians, continue to create images of an island life that, while being different from the mainstream of Western society, is still wholly contemporary. It's a seductive combination that seems to offer the best of both worlds.

#### Access to resources

Although Orkney's cultural organisations receive less public subsidy than might be expected, and certainly less than many of their peers in other parts of the country, it is essential not to underestimate the importance of the grant aid that has been made available. The past 30 years have seen a steady and important growth in spending on culture by national governments, local authorities and other public bodies, such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise. For Orkney Islands Council, in particular, this period has been one of unusual prosperity, with interest income from the Oil Reserve Fund making up 6% of Council income in 2009/10.<sup>109</sup> (This revenue is greater than the Council's spending on leisure and culture during the same year at just over 5%.<sup>110</sup>) Although OIC's grant aid to key organisations such as the Pier Arts Centre and St Magnus Festival is not great, either in relation to their turnover or in comparison with peers elsewhere, its importance should not be underestimated, not least because it has enabled much more substantial partnership funding from the Scottish Arts Council and its successor body, Creative Scotland.

Cultural organisations have benefited in other ways too: the original purchase of the harbourside warehouse that is now the Pier Arts Centre was enabled by a grant from Occidental Petroleum, while its redevelopment could not have taken place without the National Lottery. European funding and special initiatives, such as Scotland's Islands, have added to the available resources at different times.

### **Good timing**

It must also be acknowledged that Orkney was in the right place at the right time. It became ready to develop its cultural life at a time, in the late 1970s, when macro-economic trends were creating a prosperous consumer society (with what consequences we are discovering). That readiness itself was partly shaped by the social changes of the 1950s and 1960s, which produced a new generation of art school graduates (including some Orcadians) with different ideas about art and different expectations of life. Enough of them had found their way to Orkney (or back to Orkney) by the 1970s to create a need and demand for new cultural organisations. Thus when Margaret Gardiner proposed donating her collection to the people of Orkney, there were already enough active artists who knew the value of her gift and were keen to use it as the basis of a new centre capable of supporting their work.

The problem with being ready at the right time is that such moments can only be recognised in retrospect. No one in Orkney knew in 1977 that this was a good time to launch a contemporary music festival or establish a gallery of modernist art. On the contrary, the voices saying that this was a very bad thing to do and a very bad time to do it were not hard to find. And perhaps we'd now think they'd been proven right, if the St Magnus Festival and the Pier had not been successful. So what lesson can we draw, if any, from this question of timing?

Perhaps only that, since we can't change those external factors, and life is too short to wait for the perfect combination of favourable circumstances, all we can do is believe that now is the right time. If, as the Romans believed, fortune favours the brave, perhaps that has been the key behind some of Orkney's successes: people made their own luck.



## 5 Principles: Learning from Orkney's culture

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### 5.1 ORCADIAN SPECIFICITIES AND THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Highlands and Islands Enterprise commissioned this study to understand how culture has developed so strongly in the Orkney Islands *and* to identify the lessons that might be drawn from that experience. The implicit question is whether Orkney's success in culture could be reproduced elsewhere. The approach taken in this study, which recognises not only the visible story of arts administration but also the deeper, often unconscious or ambiguous, influence of people's beliefs, values and imaginations, is itself a caution against direct imitation.

The development of Orkney's culture, with its great strengths and occasional weaknesses, is the result of specific conditions. Geography, history and culture (in the broadest sense) have played determining roles. So, in their far more unpredictable ways, have individual people, in the past and today. It would be impossible to recreate what has happened in Orkney somewhere else and futile to try. Neither the conditions nor the people exist elsewhere – and nor should we want them to. Human differences, which make each place and its culture unique, are rich sources of diversity and delight, protecting us from the Macdonaldisation of our world.

But if we look at how cultural development has occurred within the specificities of Orcadian conditions, it becomes possible to identify some patterns associated with success. Many of those could be described as behaviours. A crucial example is the place of volunteers, on whose work so much of Orkney's cultural life depends. The habit of volunteering reflects Orcadian (and British) social values but it is the behaviours of individuals working together that makes it flourish. People may be culturally-inclined to offer their time and skill, but if they are taken for granted, unsupported or patronised, they will soon stop.

It is possible to draw some of those behaviours into principles that can guide future cultural development in Orkney and elsewhere.



Northlight Studio, Stromness, June 2011

## 5.2 USING PRINCIPLES

Principles are not prescriptions. They support thinking; they don't replace it. The best that can be said is that cultural organisations, programmes and policies that are consistent with the 'Orkney Principles' set out below are more likely to find success than those which pull against them. In specific cases, one or more of these principles might be inappropriate or irrelevant. Thus, 'Dig where you stand', which is about making the most of local assets, may not be relevant if there is a compelling reason for importing something from elsewhere. The value of the principles, even when it is decided to go against them, is in helping to make behaviours more conscious and visible, and in testing the thinking behind them. The intention is not to claim that only cultural initiatives that fit with these principles will be successful but that those which don't should at least have a good explanation of why they are going in a different direction.

The principles set out here are the latest iteration of a conceptual tool that I first used in 1995, when commissioned to write a strategy for community arts development in Belfast. New versions have been articulated in subsequent work, adapted to different circumstances, the findings of research and the needs of other programmes. The most recent published account was associated with 'Living Heritage', a community development programme on which I worked for the King Baudouin Foundation between 2001 and 2005.<sup>111</sup> The present study has been a further opportunity to test and revise these ideas and the principles set out below stand on both its findings and a wider and older body of thinking.



Before a Scottish Chamber Orchestra Concert, St Magnus International Festival, 2011

## 5.3 THE ORKNEY PRINCIPLES

### 5.3.1 Leadership with a clear vision

Successful projects need leaders with a strong idea of what they are trying to achieve and the ability to communicate that clearly to others. This is not a licence for autocracy, although charismatic and visionary figures in the arts can be very successful and attract willing supporters. But leadership can also be distributed among quite large groups. It may be quiet and unobtrusive, as it is often in Orkney, and in my experience the most effective leaders put their egos in the service of the cause, not

the other way around. But leadership takes responsibility, holds an idea with such integrity that others will both believe in it and feel safe that someone understands what is being done and why it is worth it. Good leadership builds trust and commitment, even love; these may not figure often in cultural policy documents but they are among the most powerful forces in arts development.

### 5.3.2 Demonstrating value

Cultural initiatives attract broad support when they are seen to benefit the community. Those benefits may be social, economic, educational or a combination of all these and more, in addition to their obviously artistic or cultural benefit, but it cannot be taken for granted that they are generally understood. The people behind an arts festival may have a very good understanding of its complex value to the community. The community may see only the outward form and have little interest in it, whilst at the same time being conscious of the inconvenience it causes as they go about their daily lives. The most successful initiatives not only have a real and complex local value – they are able to tell the story of that value in ways that people who have little or no involvement in it can appreciate.

### 5.3.3 A sustainable economic model

Public funding for the arts and culture, and for many other aspects of contemporary life, has grown hugely since the birth of the welfare state after the Second World War. Today, many arts and cultural organisations could not exist without some form of financial assistance. Successful ones can sometimes find themselves attracting large investment that result in changes of direction and loss of control. There is no single economic model for cultural organisations: their financial needs vary according to purpose, programme, ambition, location and many other factors. But those with diverse sources of income – including support in kind, such as volunteer time – tend to be most sustainable. At a time of economic contraction and sharp cutbacks in public spending, developing initiatives that are not dependent on any single source of income is perhaps more important than ever.

### 5.3.4 Valuing volunteers

Volunteers are central to cultural and social life in Britain: one in two people aged between 65 and 74 volunteer their time.<sup>112</sup> The obvious value this brings the cultural sector is a huge increase in staffing at very little cost. Orkney is a salient example, where very little cultural activity would be possible without this gifted work. But the relationships and networks enabled by these volunteers are no less vital: through them, Orkney's arts and culture are inextricably woven into the social fabric of the community. Volunteering works well, as it does here, when the time, skills and other resources given are genuinely appreciated and when volunteers are treated not as unpaid workers but as small scale philanthropists who share the values of the organisations they support.

### 5.3.5 Open, democratic governance

Britain has the oldest charity law in the world, dating back to the reign of King James VI/I, and most arts organisations are independent charities run by voluntary boards. It also has a strong confidence in democratic processes. As a result it has the legal mechanisms and cultural values to govern independent cultural and voluntary organisations effectively. This is all so well established that it may be taken for granted, though not in countries, including many in Europe, where neither the structures nor the traditions for independent self-organisation are so well established. Transparent governance and management processes that are seen to be fair by everyone involved are enabling. They build internal and external trust and make organisations reliable partners; they also reduce the incidence of disputes. They take time, but much less than resolving the problems they deal with as matters of everyday governance.

### 5.3.6 Flexible and responsive

Like governance, these key characteristics of successful cultural organisations may be overlooked unless they are absent. Cultural organisations are rarely the strongest players anywhere. They do not control much of the environment in which they operate. They also work in a field – art and culture – whose results are unpredictable. Consequently they do best when they can flex in response to changing circumstances, adapting to the needs of others, while never losing sight of their own purpose. It is the difference between seizing a good opportunity and being opportunistic. With a strong vision, one can adapt the route without losing sight of the destination.

### 5.3.7 Confidence and humility

Successful organisations – and this is true of most of Orkney’s cultural sector – thrive on a curious balance of confidence and humility. They believe in the value of literature, archaeology or folk music in principle, and in their own contribution to it; they also have confidence that their plans will be realised. But there is a counterbalancing humility that sees their work as being in the service of larger and higher causes – literature, archaeology or folk music, perhaps, or the community or Orkney or the future. It also helps them to stay sharp, because they do not take success for granted. The result, at its best, is that groups have the courage to do things they have never tried, often in the face of practical difficulties, but without becoming arrogant or complacent. It’s a subtle line, but one that the best organisations tread with instinctive sensitivity.

### 5.3.8 Cooperative and competitive

The idea of mutual assistance is very important to Orkney’s society and to its culture. Cooperation between individuals and organisations has enabled them to do more than they could alone. There is room for rivalry, but the sense of being all in the same island together is very real and focuses the mind. But competition can also be productive. An organisation or an artist can compete with themselves, especially with their past selves, so that striving to achieve more than last time and not to rest on the laurels of success helps keep work fresh, aspirational and interesting. Cooperation with others and competition with oneself can be a good combination.

### 5.3.9 Always positive

Human beings are at their best when they feel attracted to something: no one enjoys being pushed into doing anything. Orkney's cultural organisations have been good at creating a positive culture that draws people towards them. Their success is rooted in somebody deciding to say yes rather than no. From a Director of Education responding positively to an artist's request for work to a caretaker changing his routine to accommodate a performance, people seem to have been willing to do rather than not do whenever possible. There are times when resistance or standing one's ground are right, but a readiness to look for how something might be done, rather than for justifications as to why it cannot, is a powerful, enabling habit.

### 5.3.10 'Dig where you stand'

This is the motto of the Living Archive in Milton Keynes, a new city built on old towns in the English Midlands. It remains the simplest expression of a basic tenet of good cultural development: to find the value in existing cultural assets. Orkney's cultural life is distinctive because it has grown from what and who was there. The St Magnus Festival exists because Sir Peter Maxwell Davis made his home on Hoy; a jewellery industry exists because Ola Gorie chose to create a workshop in her home rather than moving to a city after graduation. These, and other instances that could be mentioned, were not sufficient for what followed, but they were absolutely necessary. Other dimensions can be brought in and interact with what is there, but understanding, sometimes even recognising, the qualities of local people, traditions and environments is always a good starting place for development.



## 6 Futures: Sustaining Orkney's culture

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Orkney's future, as far as I'm concerned, is to maintain itself – and trust itself – as a locus of ongoing possibility.

Seamus Heaney, 'Winds Freshening' (2009)<sup>13</sup>

### 6.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF ORKNEY'S CULTURAL LIFE

Orkney is truly a place of fables, an isle full of noises. There is a strong belief among Orcadians – but not only Orcadians – in its exceptionality. That belief was repeatedly expressed by interviewees and those who came to the public meetings: indeed it is reflected in the sheer number of people willing to contribute to the study and happy to speak for an hour or more about the county's cultural distinction. The same belief was implied in the research brief, which presented Orkney as worth studying precisely because it was more successful in cultural development than other areas with apparently similar assets and comparable situations.

This study shows that belief to be well founded. Orkney has indeed been unusually successful in developing its cultural life. It has always had a strong culture, the archaeological and historical traces of which now form one of its key tourism assets. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Orkney was fortunate in producing and nurturing some outstanding new artists. J. Storer Clouston, Stanley Cursiter, Edwin Muir, Hugh Marwick, George Mackay Brown, Ola Gorie, Margaret Tait, Sylvia Wishart and many others acted as catalytic agents, simply by doing their work and having expectations of their society. Their example encouraged countless others in all walks of life, with and without artistic ambitions of their own, to establish new arts and cultural programmes. Some are well known in Orkney, often for their work in the arts; others stay naturally in the background. All drew on Orkney's 'can do, will do' culture to make more of its cultural assets.

Equally important are those who came to Orkney, particularly since the 1970s, and have been well received. A few are famous beyond their own disciplines; most are known and respected in their fields as poets, musicians, painters, composers, designers, potters, architects, novelists, silversmiths – in short, as *makars*. Others still, the teachers, the committee members and the chair shifters, have worked quietly in the background, ensuring that what everyone enjoys is as good as it can be.

Between them, they have made a rich cultural ecology in which the big organisations and the voluntary groups, the nationally celebrated and the local heroes, each have a contribution to make and a place to make it in. They have developed festivals, organisations, businesses and products that would be admired in any European city, in an archipelago on Europe's northern-eastern marches. They have drawn on a culture of cooperation and tolerance. Orkney may have as many rows as other small communities, but it seems to be successful at containing the fall out. If it had a motto, perhaps it should be 'We're all in this together', only in Norn.

Is Orkney's cultural life today exceptional? Readers who have got this far will have made up their own minds, if they didn't already have views on the subject. But, in my opinion, the HIE brief was justified in its assumption that what has happened here over the past few decades is not just unusual: it is remarkable.

And that may be worth saying for two reasons. First, because it is not clear to me, after all the conversations I have had with Orcadians, that everyone quite sees what has been achieved and what an asset it is to the islands' community.

Orkney's culture is an important economic asset, both in terms of the employment and wealth it generates directly, and as an attraction for the tourists crucial to the local economy. It is also a vital social asset, bringing people together in small and large gatherings, developing skills, experience and knowledge, fostering common purpose, and building social capital. And it is perhaps most important of all for its cultural functions: in opening up imaginations, building shared memories, raising aspirations, giving hope and delight – simply making Orkney a place where people want to live. And Orkney's future depends absolutely on that.



The Ring of Brodgar

## 6.2 A POINT OF TRANSITION

The second reason it is worth recording the exceptional achievements of Orkney's culture is that, by chance, this study has been commissioned at a point of transition that may prove, 30 years hence, to have been very important. There is a generational change underway in many of Orkney's cultural organisations. The post-war Orcadians and the people who came to Orkney in the 1970s and 1980s, those who, often together, founded many of the organisations and businesses mentioned here, are reaching or have passed retirement age; some have died. All are leaving gaps in the woods and some people doubt whether they can be replaced.

*'I would find it difficult to come up with names of people of the stature of George and Max of a younger generation; I suppose you're not going to have that in every generation in a small community. It's quite a disturbing thought, actually, that there may not be those people around for a younger generation to look to.'*

The leadership of the St Magnus Festival has recently passed in just that way to the generation that came of age in the 1980s and 1990s – just that moment when Orkney's cultural life was flowering. Other organisations are changing too: new board members and activists are taking up the reins. Of course, this is always happening, on one level, but Orkney without some of the figures that have dominated its cultural life in the past 30 years looks like a very different place. It is also true that

the loss of a few key people is likely to have a much greater effect in a small community than in a city. There is good reason to think that Orkney's culture will change more in the next ten years than in the last twenty.

That generational change is the more significant because it happens against a background of economic crisis and public sector spending cuts. Orkney's festivals, which have developed principally thanks to box office income and (with the exception of the St Magnus Festival) small grants, are vulnerable to these developments. When people are concerned about their livelihoods, they are less willing to spend on leisure and holidays, although the last published data on Orkney tourism, for 2009, does not show a decline. Orkney Islands Council, although a relatively wealthy local authority thanks to the Oil Reserve Fund, has already made spending cuts, including to cultural grants for 2011/12.

Apart from the Pier Arts Centre and St Magnus International Festival, Orkney's cultural organisations are not generally dependent on regular public funds, as is the case elsewhere. Given their origins in the enthusiasm of individuals there is good reason to believe that they will weather this storm, albeit with difficulty.

A more speculative question is whether Orkney's cultural leadership will renew itself. There are certainly many gifted and committed people in their 40s and 50s who are active in the cultural life of Orkney, so one might say that there is a new generation in the wings. Indeed, in a number of cases – at the Pier, several festivals and in the Council, for example – they are already firmly on stage. Like the passing generation, they are also a mix of Orcadians and incomers, each with their own perspectives and skills to offer.

But their task will be different to their predecessors' who had, if not a blank map, at least far fewer existing arts and cultural assets. They had no precedents to preserve and few expectations to meet: they had, in short, not much to live up to or lose. They pass on a very different cultural landscape shaped by the achievements described here. Changing a familiar and well-loved festival or site is fraught with risks: comparisons will always be made. As the arts world has professionalised, so it has become more complicated: many of the short cuts taken and quick wins scored 20 or 30 years ago will not be available to the next generations of leaders.

Orkney's cultural organisations have, then, some tricky waters to navigate over the next decade. It might be helpful, therefore, to conclude with some reflections on how that might be done, based on the lessons that emerge from this study.



St Magnus International Festival

### 6.3 SUSTAINING SUCCESS BEYOND 2020

All big things grow from little things, but new little things are destroyed by their environments unless they are cherished for reasons more like aesthetic appreciation than practical utility.

Cyril Stanley Smith, quoted by Jane Jacobs<sup>14</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this study to make recommendations about individual organisations or indeed wider issues of policy as regards Orkney's cultural life and development. Its findings are intended to encourage reflection and debate, not provide answers that belong to the people of Orkney, its cultural experts and its elected representatives. However, two general observations may further stimulate that debate and provide some focus for short and medium term action.

A hands-off approach to cultural development has served Orkney well, but those concerned to maintain current success might consider whether it is time to give more attention to the concerns of artists and cultural organisations, at least over the next five years. This is not intended to encourage intervention in a field where independence has been a real asset, but to alert the major institutions – Orkney Islands Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Creative Scotland in particular – to changes now taking place in Orkney's cultural ecology.

How they respond to that will vary between institutions, but there is a basic need to give attention to what is happening. One organisation may just want space and time to manage a change of leadership; another may need short-term help with cash flow, while a third may have an opportunity for expansion. The key is not to assume that what has happened will continue to happen but to offer a supportive presence as the organisations go through some unforeseeable changes. In doing that, it will be as well to give particular attention to helping the next generation establish itself, despite the difficult economic climate.

*'People have got far less money and Orkney is an expensive destination. Some of the people with websites for advance bookings have found people have been cancelling'*

Orkney Arts Forum could be of great assistance here in providing space for thinking and discussion and close contact with the people who are most involved. The development of a new cultural strategy for Orkney – perhaps with a 10-year horizon – within the wider community-planning framework is also a helpful opportunity.

The second observation is more concrete and concerns the longer-term financial stability of Orkney's cultural sector. As the report makes clear, there is much to admire in the independent and entrepreneurial way in which arts and cultural leaders have developed their work. Collectively, they have achieved a remarkable level of activity in relation to the public funding that supports it. But that success is now at risk for several reasons:

- Public sector cutbacks are affecting the council and many of the other funding sources that have supported the arts in Orkney, including national bodies;
- The wider state of the economy is likely to reduce cultural organisations' ability to earn income through ticket sales and admissions as tourism comes under pressure and local people find their disposable income reducing;

- The success of several organisations has raised the level of their operation, so that what was once done on an entirely voluntary basis now requires more professional input, with consequences for their business models.

One response would be to establish an Orkney Cultural Foundation as a mechanism through which to raise and distribute funds for cultural activity without compromising the independence of that activity. A Cultural Foundation would aim to build an endowment dedicated to securing cultural resources for Orkney as a whole. Funds for the endowment might come from individual donors, legacies, charitable trusts, as well as public sources; (the present Westminster government sees endowments as a priority and has set aside some funds to encourage their growth). Income could be used to support the whole range of cultural activity, providing a safety net for some of the financial risky work of festivals and making possible new ideas, such as the Sanday Soulkas or the Papay Gyro Nights.

It is important to say clearly that the Orkney Cultural Foundation envisaged here is a financial instrument not a development agency. However successful an Arts Trust has been in Shetland, Orkney has taken a completely different route that has suited it well. There is little to gain and much to lose by the creation of a centralised delivery structure for the arts in Orkney, even were there the desire and possibility of doing so. Nor should a Cultural Foundation be compared to the Community Development Trusts that have been established on Shapinsay, Hoy, Sanday and elsewhere. These are democratic forums that take responsibility for shaping the future of individual communities. Again, the role of a Cultural Foundation, which would be limited to providing funds for activities that would happen at a lower scale or not at all, is very different.

Orkney is a prosperous, united community, used to doing things for itself: if a way to pool and grow resources for culture cannot be found here, one wonders where it can. It has the resources – economic, social and above all cultural – to unite and show what a difference a strong, curious and lively cultural life can make to the vitality and viability of island communities. Orkney has achieved exceptionally in its cultural life during the past 30 years. It has every opportunity to do more in the next 30 and to be a beacon for similar places across the UK, Europe and perhaps further.



## 7 Appendices

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### 7.1 ORKNEY'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A FEW MILESTONES

- 1850 Skara Brae is uncovered by a storm
- 1858 Stromness Museum moves into its current home
- 1887 Stanley Cursiter born in Kirkwall;  
Edwin Muir born in Deerness
- 1890 First published reference to the Orkney Town Band
- 1921 George Mackay Brown born in Stromness
- 1940 *The Story & the Fable, An Autobiography*, by Edwin Muir
- 1944 Work begins on the Italian Chapel at Lamb Holm
- 1946 *Country Sonnets*, by Robert Rendall
- 1948 Orkney Strathspey and Reel Society formed, with 28 founding members
- 1949 First Stromness Shopping Week attracts 4,000 visitors
- 1954 *The Storm and Other Poems*, by George Mackay Brown, published by The Orkney Herald
- 1955 The Phoenix Cinema opens in Kirkwall  
Ernest Marwick joins the Orkney Herald
- 1958 Ronald Simison uncovers The Tomb of the Eagles in South Ronaldsay
- 1960 Ola Gorie is the first jewellery graduate at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen
- 1965 Phoenix Records, issues 'Owre the Ferry' by Angus Findlater and three other EPs
- 1968 Orkney Heritage Society founded  
Restoration of Tankerness House and opening as the county museum  
Jean Leonard takes up post as music teacher at Stromness Academy
- 1969 *An Orkney Tapestry*, George Mackay Brown
- 1971 Peter Maxwell Davies makes his home in Hoy
- 1975 *The Folklore of Orkney and Shetland*, by Ernest Marwick
- 1977 *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* opens the first St Magnus Festival in Kirkwall
- 1979 Margaret Gardiner donates her art collection to the people of Orkney
- 1981 The Movies play at St Magnus Hall
- 1983 First Orkney Folk Festival  
Soulisquoy Printmakers established in Kirkwall
- 1986 Isaac Stern recital at the Academy Hall in Stromness
- 1987 *History of Orkney*, by William Thomson
- 1990 Parts of the naval site at Lyness become a museum in the care of the Islands Council
- 1991 First Orkney Science Festival
- 1997 Orkney Crafts Trail brochure first published
- 1998 Formation of the Orkney Traditional Music Project
- 1999 The Pickaquoy Centre opens, with the New Phoenix Cinema  
The Heart of Neolithic Orkney recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO
- 2000 OIC Community Education starts to offer music composition as an evening class  
The Gable End Theatre is created in a former school on Hoy
- 2001 Orkney Arts Forum established

- 2003 New Library and Archives Building in Kirkwall opens
- 2004 Orkney Songwriters nights start  
The Wrigley Sisters return to Orkney and open The Reel  
Clare Gee is appointed Orkney's first Arts Development Officer
- 2005 Sylvia Wishart elected a Member of the Royal Scottish Academy  
Opening of Fusion night club
- 2006 Orkney Blues Festival established  
Papdale Primary School pARTners year long residency by Tumim & Prendergast  
Creation of Orkney Singers
- 2007 16,500 people visit the Pier Arts Centre in the seven weeks after its reopening;  
MagFest starts to run alongside St Magnus Festival  
Pam Beasant is awarded the first GMB Fellowship
- 2009 Orkney Youth Music Forum set up
- 2011 Orkney College gains full university status as part of the University of the Highlands and Islands

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### 7.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Notes and references

- <sup>1</sup> Davies 1996:215
- <sup>2</sup> Mackay Brown 1969:1
- <sup>3</sup> HIE, The Impact on Orkney of a Generation of Cultural Focus, Tender Document 16 February 2011
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Mackay Brown 1969:1
- <sup>6</sup> It is often said that Orkney comprises some 70 islands, but since only 38 of these are more than 15 hectares, this may give a slightly misleading impression; Fleming lists 19 inhabited islands in 2001, Fleming 2003.
- <sup>7</sup> In 2001, Orkney had 19,220 inhabitants; by 2010, this had risen to 20,110; population: Scottish National Statistics, 'Change Over Time report for Orkney Islands Local Authority', <http://www.sns.gov.uk/> (accessed 14.9.2011)
- <sup>8</sup> Scotland's population grew from 5,064,200 in 2001 to 5,222,100 in 2010; the comparable figures for Shetland are 21,960 and 22,400 and for Eilean Siar (the Western Isles) 26,450 and 26,190. The population of Highland Council area grew more than Orkney's, its increase from 208,920 to 221,630 being a growth rate of almost 6.1%. However, comparison between Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles is more fruitful since they share many similar conditions. <http://www.sns.gov.uk/> (accessed 6.10.2011)
- <sup>9</sup> Data for 1981-2001 is taken from Fleming 2003, Table 1; data from the 2011 census was not available at the time of writing, so the latest population figures (2010) provided by Scottish National Statistics have been used see <http://www.sns.gov.uk/> (accessed 6.10.2011).
- <sup>10</sup> National Records of Scotland, *Orkney Islands Council Area Factsheet* (05.08.2011) <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files2/stats/council-area-data-sheets/orkney-islands-factsheet.pdf> (accessed 10.10.2011)
- <sup>11</sup> Data from 2001 Census available at <http://www.scrol.gov.uk/scrol/thematicmapping/thematicmap.jsp>
- <sup>12</sup> The average price paid for a house in Orkney over the last 5 years was £111,290, but this masks huge variations between the isles, where houses have sold for as little as £25,000 and the towns, where house prices are comparable with those in many British cities outside the South East. There are also places where house prices are lower, particularly in Scotland: in Fife, for example, within easy reach of the Central belt, the average sale price achieved in Lochgelly was £102,856 and in Cowdenbeath £107,523. The price of property in Orkney is much less competitive than it was in the past, particularly when one considers the higher costs that Orcadians bear for fuel, transport and other basics. (Data available from <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/>.)
- <sup>13</sup> *Orkney Economic Review 2011*, p.2. Significantly, between 2007 and 2009, as recession triggered by the banking crisis hit the UK economy, Orkney experienced a growth in unemployment of 44%, compared to 86% for Scotland and 95% for the country as a whole, which suggests that the county's economy is both atypical and more resilient; *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, p.2.
- <sup>14</sup> 'The age profile has been changing, with the biggest increase between 2001 and 2007 in the proportion aged over 55, while the biggest drop over the same period has been in children under 15 years old.'

## Notes and references (cont.)

- <sup>15</sup> 85.9% of people were economically active in Orkney (2005 to 2009); the average for Great Britain was 78.7%; *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, p.4
- <sup>16</sup> 12.1% of Orcadians were self-employed in June 2009; the comparable figures were 7.5% for Scotland and 9.1% for Great Britain as a whole; *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, p.4
- <sup>17</sup> In September 2009, seven jobseekers were living on Sanday; Westray and Papa Westray, with no jobseekers, had achieved the ideal of full employment. See *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, Orkney Islands Council, p.3, [http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Business-and-Trade/Economic\\_Review\\_2010.pdf](http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Business-and-Trade/Economic_Review_2010.pdf) (accessed 17.5.2011)
- <sup>18</sup> In 2007, construction was estimated to contribute £40 million GVA to the local economy, compared with £68 million for services, a much higher proportion than in Scotland as a whole, where the comparable figures were £6,373 million and £36,759 million; *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, p.6.
- <sup>19</sup> In 1999, 9.5 million tonnes of crude oil were loaded at the Flotta terminal; by 2009, this was down to 2.9 million, but 15 wind turbines had been built with planning permission granted for a further 17. Marine energy was in rapid development. *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, pp.22-3.
- <sup>20</sup> In 2009, just 3,400 live fish tonnes were landed in Orkney, compared to 78,000 tonnes in Shetland, suggesting that there's truth in the saw about Orcadians being farmers with boats and Shetlanders fishermen with crofts; Scottish Sea Fisheries Statistics 2009, p.18, available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/09/15155811/0> (accessed 6.10.2011).
- <sup>21</sup> Cattle numbers fell from 92,400 in 2004 to 83,600 in 2009, while sheep numbers declined from 145,400 to 120,400 over the same period; land used for agriculture fell from 92,500 hectares to 83,500; *Orkney Economic Review 2010*, pp.14-15.
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.visitorkney.com/tastes/index.asp>
- <sup>23</sup> This associational branding is very clear in these websites: <http://www.visitorkney.com/tastes/index.asp>
- <sup>24</sup> Greig, 2011:150
- <sup>25</sup> AB Associates, 2010, Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09 p.10
- <sup>26</sup> Eighty-one percent of visitors are UK based and 45% come from Scotland, *Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09*. p.23
- <sup>27</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.78
- <sup>28</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.78
- <sup>29</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.77
- <sup>30</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.17
- <sup>31</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.51
- <sup>32</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.53
- <sup>33</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.54
- <sup>34</sup> Heddle, S. & Hinckley, J., *Orkney Folk Festival May 2007 Independent Audience & Market Research Report*, John Hinckley & Associates, Business Planning Consultants, p.10
- <sup>35</sup> *The Complete Scotland* (n.d) 4<sup>th</sup> edition, London: Ward Lock p. 431
- <sup>36</sup> Wickham-Jones, 2011:1; see also UNESCO, World Heritage Convention, Heart of Neolithic Orkney description <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/514> (accessed 6.10.2011)
- <sup>37</sup> Skara Brae received 69,055 visitors in 2009/10, earning historic Scotland almost £400,000; there is a big gap, however, between the first three sites, which attract 1.8 million visitors between them (1.2 million at Edinburgh Castle alone) and the rest of the top ten; *Historic Scotland Annual Report and Accounts 2009-2010*, p.14.



## Notes and references (cont.)

- <sup>38</sup> Although by no means all historic sites are in the custodianship of Historic Scotland, this is one indication of Orkney's archaeological and historical riches. <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/> (accessed 20.10.2011)
- <sup>39</sup> As set out in the Kirkwall Charters.
- <sup>40</sup> Orkney 2020: Our Vision, Orkney's Community Plan, p24
- <sup>41</sup> Wickham-Jones 2011:202; the pumping station at Lyness buildings was converted in 1990, so this respectability is starting to acquire a history of its own.
- <sup>42</sup> A playbill for the opera is displayed in the Orkney Museum; a copy of the Handbook of the Octocentenary is held in the County Archives.
- <sup>43</sup> Hamilton 1995:57
- <sup>44</sup> From 25:08 to 25:36, first Broadcast 10 November 2010, BBC Scotland <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00vt0b5> (accessed 29.6.2011)
- <sup>45</sup> The Festival is generally described here as the St Magnus Festival, although it formally changed its name to the St Magnus International Festival in November 2010. The earlier name is used here, except when specific reference is made to the 2011 event, principally because almost everyone who spoke to me still calls it the St Magnus Festival, but also to avoid an excessive repetition that might slow the reader.
- <sup>46</sup> Peter Maxwell Davies was knighted in 1987 and made Master of the Queen's Music in 2004; he has lived in Orkney since 1971, but moved from Hoy to Sanday some years ago.
- <sup>47</sup> Thirty years later, the equivalent figure was £580 million for England alone, including National Lottery funds; see Matarasso 2006 and <http://www.falmouth.ac.uk/508/podcasts-23/go-to-the-podcast-media-179/guest-lecture-podcasts-839.html> (accessed 26.10.2011)
- <sup>48</sup> Beasant 2002:10
- <sup>49</sup> The 2011 Festival had 322 supporters, of whom 146 (45.3%) came from Orkney and 176 (54.7%) came from out of Orkney, including places as far distant as the USA, Canada and Australia.
- <sup>50</sup> The Artistic Director position was renamed Festival Director in 1998.
- <sup>51</sup> Based on annual returns submitted to the <http://www.oscr.org.uk/> (accessed 14.9.11)
- <sup>52</sup> Between 2006 and 2009, the OIC grant to St Magnus Festival was £84,000, reducing to £76,200 in 2010; in 2011 the core grant was reduced to £62,400 as part of rebalancing and then reduced to £56,160 as part of OIC cuts applied to all organisations in the Culture Fund. The Festival expects this figure to reduce further in 2012.
- <sup>53</sup> The Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival Limited, Annual Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31 March 2010, available at <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/> (accessed 27.10.11)
- <sup>54</sup> In these calculations £20,659 of income from St Magnus Festival supporters has been moved from 'earned income' to 'donations', since HM Revenue & Customs recognise it as charitable for Gift Aid.
- <sup>55</sup> The Festival Manager is the only full time employee, supported by a part-time Administrator; the Artistic Director is freelance and part-time. Two part-time box office and administration assistants are employed between April and June each year.
- <sup>56</sup> <http://stromnessshoppingweek.co.uk/shopping-week-history.html> (accessed 28.10.11)
- <sup>57</sup> <http://www.visitorkney.com/events/> (accessed 10.6.2011)
- <sup>58</sup> <http://www.oisf.org/index.php?path=background> (accessed 31.10.2011)
- <sup>59</sup> <http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/YOUTHMUSICFORUM/index.asp?pageid=2172> (10.12.12)
- <sup>60</sup> <http://northings.com/2011/09/27/orkney-blues-festival-2/> (14.12.11)

## Notes and references (cont.)

- <sup>61</sup> From a piece written by George Mackay Brown in 1988 and first published in The Pier Gallery: The First Ten Years; [http://www.pierartscentre.com/orkney\\_and\\_the\\_artist.html](http://www.pierartscentre.com/orkney_and_the_artist.html) (accessed 14.6.11)
- <sup>62</sup> Hamilton 1995:68
- <sup>63</sup> <http://www.museumsgalleryscotland.org.uk/member/pier-arts-centre> (accessed 1.11.11)
- <sup>64</sup> <http://www.bmag.org.uk/about> (accessed 2.11.11)
- <sup>65</sup> <http://cameramarr.wordpress.com/exhibition-projects/art-agriculture/> (accessed 1.11.11)
- <sup>66</sup> <http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/S/Stromness-Townscape-Heritage-Initiative-STHI.htm> (15.12.11)
- <sup>67</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/ourpriorities/audiences/tatenational/tateconnects/> (15.12.11)
- <sup>68</sup> Figures provided by Pier Arts Centre and drawn from SAC Foundation Organisations Annual Review 2008/09, [http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/resources/publications/Annual%20reports%20&%20plans/Pdf/FO%20and%20FXO%20Annual%20Reviews%202008\\_09/Foundation%20Organisations%20Annual%20Review%20200809.pdf](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/resources/publications/Annual%20reports%20&%20plans/Pdf/FO%20and%20FXO%20Annual%20Reviews%202008_09/Foundation%20Organisations%20Annual%20Review%20200809.pdf) (accessed 14.10.2011)
- <sup>69</sup> <http://www.orkneydesignercrafts.com> (accessed 5.09.11)
- <sup>70</sup> <http://www.wheeling-steen.co.uk/pages/about.php> (accessed 5.10.11)
- <sup>71</sup> Orkney Economic Review 2010, p.5
- <sup>72</sup> <http://stir.academia.edu/IanFillis/Papers/239540/> (accessed 11.10.2011)
- <sup>73</sup> <https://www.creative-industries.co.uk/> (accessed 3.11.11)
- <sup>74</sup> <https://www.creative-industries.co.uk/> (accessed 3.11.11)
- <sup>75</sup> <http://press.arts council.org.uk/content/Detail.aspx?ReleaseID=1219&NewsAreaID=2> (accessed 3.11.11)
- <sup>76</sup> <http://www.creativescotland.com/arts-screen-and-creative-industries/literature> (accessed 5.11.11)
- <sup>77</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/artforms/literature/> (accessed 5.11.11)
- <sup>78</sup> [http://www.mla.gov.uk/about/work\\_with/mla/libraries](http://www.mla.gov.uk/about/work_with/mla/libraries) (accessed 3.11.11)
- <sup>79</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Tourism-Culture-Sports/TrendPublicLibraries> (accessed 5.11.11)
- <sup>80</sup> <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu/lampost10/exp10.html> (accessed 5.11.11)
- <sup>81</sup> <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu/lampost10/exp10.html> (accessed 5.11.11)
- <sup>82</sup> Ninth edition, p.451; available at Google Books
- <sup>83</sup> In 2011/12, The Pier Arts Centre received a grant of £45,000 and the St Magnus Festival a grant of £56,160; in each case a 10% reduction on what had originally been planned.
- <sup>84</sup> Shetland Arts Development Agency, Financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2011 <http://www.shetlandarts.org/about/reports-and-documents/> (accessed 4.11.11)
- <sup>85</sup> Orkney Library Service has a particularly strong social networking aspect, with a 'Klout score' – a quantitative assessment of online influence via Twitter and Facebook – of 58, which is comparable to those achieved by the British Library (62) and the US Library of Congress (63): <http://musingsaboutlibrarianship.blogspot.com/2011/02/most-influent-libraries-on-twitter.html> (accessed 5.7.2011)
- <sup>86</sup> CIPFA Public Library Statistics for Orkney 2009/10; in 2008/09, Orkney Libraries had 6,571 visits per head of population; in 2010//, this figure had risen to 7,141, making Orkney 13<sup>th</sup> among 32 library authorities in Scotland in visits per head (Figures from Audit Scotland Compendium of Scottish local government statistics, <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/performance/service> (accessed 8.12.11)

## Notes and references (cont.)

- <sup>87</sup> Orkney Visitor Survey 2008/09, p.32
- <sup>88</sup> As long ago as 1991, in a report for HIE on *The Economic Importance of the Arts in the Highlands and Islands* by Mackay Consultants, it was reported that the St Magnus Festival 'receives more critical attention than any other cultural event in the Highlands and Islands', Hamilton 1995:56.
- <sup>89</sup> Mackay Brown, 1969:1
- <sup>90</sup> Greig 2010:90
- <sup>91</sup> Greig 2010:100
- <sup>92</sup> Muir, 1940:71
- <sup>93</sup> Adams, D. 1980, *The Restaurant at the end of the Universe*
- <sup>94</sup> Hall, 2011:6-7
- <sup>95</sup> <http://www.peacockvisualarts.com/events/6/the-cowboy-and-the-spaceman> (accessed 14.6.2011)
- <sup>96</sup> Multum in parvo ('much in little') is the motto of the county of Rutland.
- <sup>97</sup> [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Italian\\_Chapel\\_orkney.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Italian_Chapel_orkney.JPG)
- <sup>98</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2004/jun/19/classicalmusicandopera.proms2004> (accessed 14.12.2011)
- <sup>99</sup> <http://www.allaboutorkney.com/> (accessed 11.10.2011)
- <sup>100</sup> Wickham-Jones, 2011:150
- <sup>101</sup> Fleming 2003, Table 2a.
- <sup>102</sup> Muir, 1940:32
- <sup>103</sup> Orkney Trout Fishing Association competes annually for the Ferrylouper's Trophy  
[http://www.orkneytroutfishing.co.uk/competition\\_pages/2011\\_results/2011-08.html](http://www.orkneytroutfishing.co.uk/competition_pages/2011_results/2011-08.html) (accessed 5.11.11)
- <sup>104</sup> Mackay Brown 1975:24
- <sup>105</sup> Orkney Library and Archive self evaluation 2009 p.7
- <sup>106</sup> CIPFA Public Library Statistics for Orkney 2009/10
- <sup>107</sup> *ORKNEY 2020: Our vision Orkney's Community Plan 2007-2020*, p. 21;  
<http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Council/Publications/2007/CP07MAY28LowResolution.pdf>
- <sup>108</sup> <http://www.scottishcultureonline.com/mgalbasotstradmusicawardswinner/>
- <sup>109</sup> Orkney Islands Council, Annual Performance Report 2010, p.1  
[http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Council/Performance%20and%20Statistics/OIC\\_Annual\\_Performance\\_Report\\_2010\\_accessible.pdf](http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Council/Performance%20and%20Statistics/OIC_Annual_Performance_Report_2010_accessible.pdf) (accessed 18.10.2011)
- <sup>110</sup> Orkney Islands Council, Annual Performance Report 2010, p.5
- <sup>111</sup> Living Heritage, Community Development through Culture Resources in SE Europe, Brussels
- <sup>112</sup> DCLG Citizenship Survey 2007-2008, Table 9, p.31.  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/citizenshipsurveyaprmr08> (accessed 20.5.11)
- <sup>113</sup> Peebles & Watts, 2009:5
- <sup>114</sup> Jacobs 1984:223