

Public Art – Recent Events

2018 – 2019

The Balfour

The Transitions Project



[Jack Whitwell](#) undertook 6-month residency within the old and new hospital and healthcare facilities, responding to both the history and future of The Balfour and its place within the Orkney community. This was a unique opportunity to respond to this one-off transition, to the built environments, the people and stories associated with The Balfour embracing dialogue with staff, patients and users of the hospitals. The residency allowed unique access to the sites and the artwork created was presented at the new Balfour Hospital and Healthcare Facility, becoming part of the permanent collection of art.

“My proposal responds to the transition of cultures, traditions and industries that have shaped Orkney. My sculptures will respond to these changes and how they shaped the people that call the island their home.” - Jack Whitwell.

The resulting project will realise three pieces of sculpture at The Balfour; one inside the foyer space and two within the grounds. It is anticipated that these pieces will be installed during the course of 2020.

The Integrated Artwork Project



NHS Orkney, in partnership with Orkney Islands Council's Arts Development service and supported by the charity Art in Healthcare, commissioned [Samantha Clark](#) to help create a distinctive identity for the building which will also help provide privacy, where needed, throughout the glazed entrance and central hub area. Samantha's work draws on the human relationship with the natural world. She works across video, installation, drawing, photography and creative writing. In 2018 she was awarded a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award.

"This is an important and high-profile public art opportunity in a much-anticipated new hospital. We want the main entrance to reflect our community and to be a lovely public space, and so we're looking forward to seeing the ideas and proposals as they come in." - NHS.

A third commission was awarded to The Royal Scottish Academy (RSA) to develop a scheme of work to manage the hospital's current art collection and re-present it, where possible, in The Balfour.

"The Royal Scottish Academy is delighted to be working with NHS Orkney in devising an art collection policy which will maximise the impact of existing artworks, build on this legacy and enhance the collection by engaging with the local arts community." - Jane Lawrence, RSA Art Consultant.

There are works of art across The Balfour for visitors, patients, families, friends and staff to enjoy.

2018

Pages of the Sea



[Danny Boyle's Pages of the Sea](#) was realised by a community team who made a large-scale sand portrait of a local soldier, at Scapa Beach, in order for it to be washed away by the incoming tide, as part of the World War One 100th Anniversary of Armistice.

“The community was invited to explore an online gallery of World War One casualties in order to choose someone to say a personal goodbye to.” - 14-18 NOW.

Scottish poet Carol Ann Duffy was commissioned to write a new poem to be read by individuals, families and communities as they gathered on 11 November.

The work was commissioned and produced by 14-18 NOW in collaboration with the UK's programme for the First World War centenary and delivered by National Theatre of Scotland in partnership with Orkney Islands Council as part of the World War One Commemorations budget. It was supported by The National Lottery and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

World War One Cathedral Projection

Video available from the following link: [The Great War: An Orkney Memorial Experience](#)

World War One Cathedral Projection to commemorate the Armistice, produced by Playdead and commissioned by Kirkwall Townscape Heritage Initiative (KTHI).

This was a public projection project to commemorate the centenary of the First World War armistice, in November 2018. The projection depicted life during the war period in Kirkwall and explored the history of World War One in Orkney and Kirkwall in a dynamic and inspirational way, revealing the role the islands played in the conflict. The artwork was projected onto St Magnus Cathedral, in the heart of Kirkwall. It is the most northerly cathedral in Britain, a fine example of Romanesque architecture which provided a spectacular canvas and backdrop for the projection.

The aim of the project was to provide a fitting memorial event to the 100th anniversary of the World War One armistice to depict Kirkwall life during that period and Kirkwall and Orkney's role in the conflict. This sought to increase people's understanding of life in Kirkwall during the war period and early twentieth century in general by telling the story of Kirkwall and Orkney during the war, its role and the lasting effects on the place and its inhabitants. In doing so, it engaged with multi-generational audiences and provided residents and visitors with the opportunity to learn about the history and heritage of Kirkwall during the war in a new way.

Kirkwall Town Heritage Initiative is a 5 year, £3.45 million project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Orkney Islands Council (OIC). The aim is to promote Kirkwall's heritage through providing funding for a range of building grants, public realm improvements, training, interpretation and educational projects. This project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and HES.

Skyran Moon

Stromness Academy hosted Skyran Moon by Luke Jerram with music by Dan Jones, as part of Orkney International Science Festival. Orkney was the first Scottish venue to host this work on its National Tour.

Stromness Academy
and
Stromness Community Development Trust
with
Orkney International Science Festival 6 - 12 September
present

#skyran MOON

6-16 September 2018
Museum of the Moon
art by Luke Jerram with music by Dan Jones
weekdays 4-7pm • weekends 10am-7pm • evening events

Adventures in the Solar System
in Stromness Academy
and throughout Stromness with
guided tours of the Moon and planets,
music, storytelling, science,
films, activities, art exhibition and
much more besides...

For times and details please see
skyranMOON.com • facebook/skyranMOON

WEEKDAYS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC • TOURS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM	4pm – 7pm	FREE ENTRY to "Museum of the Moon"
TALKS • EVENTS – tickets may be needed	7pm – 8pm	
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC • TOURS OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM	8pm – 10pm	TICKETS needed for some events
WEEKENDS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC • FAMILY ACTIVITIES	10am – 7pm	



2017 – 2018

Flying High

Lifestyles public art ran a series of workshops that led to Flying High by Sheena Graham George and Anjelica Kroeger. Flying High was a collaborative public artwork created by adults with learning disabilities, professional artists and local community groups in Orkney. The artwork was the result of a project launched in 2017 aimed at providing users of the Lifestyles Service access to a wide range of creative workshops. The project was designed jointly by the Orkney Islands Council's Arts Development Service and the Lifestyle Service managed by Orkney Health and Care which supports adults with learning disabilities in the county.

'Flying High' comprises 8 large canvases. The artwork will remain on permanent display at the Lifestyles Service, taking full advantage of the impressive central octogen with its vaulted glass ceiling and natural light. Local artist Sheena Graham George and Ullapool-based artist Angelica Kroeger were commissioned to carry out the project, which has included several hands-on workshops with service users from the Lifestyles Service along with partner organisations Connect, SEAL and the Blide Trust.

"Angelica and Sheena have brought their own art practices to the table whilst service users have had the opportunity to explore everything from sculpture to printmaking to painting. What stands out is the power of art to connect people". - Anthony Mottershead, Arts Officer, Orkney Islands Council, 2014-2019.

Supporting around 40 adults, the Lifestyles Service provides modern, flexible, community-based services to meet the wide-ranging needs of service users. The building, which opened in 2015 and is situated at the Pickaquoy Centre includes an IT suite, meeting facilities, activity rooms, a multi-sensory space, an outdoor garden and provides easy access to the sports and leisure facilities at the Pickaquoy Centre, Orkney's largest health and leisure facility. It promotes community involvement with the service, offering people with learning disabilities opportunities to be involved in their wider community, promoting health, wellbeing and independence.

This project was part funded by the Scottish Government and the European Community Orkney LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme; and Orkney Islands Council.

The film can be accessed on YouTube at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/mdKZTlf-ayM>

Further Information:

[The Orkney News](#)

2017

Magnus 900

Orkney celebrated St Magnus through the Magnus 900 Festival supported by Heritage Lottery Funding. This included the display of 'The Sails' in St Magnus Cathedral.

The culmination of the Birsay Mapping Magnus project will be realised in 2020 with the installation of two interpretative sign boards to mark the work done by the local community, led by The University of the Highlands Archaeology Institute, to excavate and capture the local archaeology of the Palace settlement and surrounding Birsay coastline. Five West Mainland schools took part in the project along with over 60 participants.

MAPPING MAGNUS

In 2017 the Orkney community commemorated St Magnus and celebrated his continued legacy, 900 years after his martyrdom. A programme of walks, talks, public art, new music and research included the Mapping Magnus project led by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Archaeology Institute.

Archaeological activities included archive research, walkover, geophysical and coastal surveys and excavation. These focused upon Palace settlement and the surrounding Birsay coastline. Five West Mainland schools took part in the project along with over 60 participants.

Magnus Frithson was joint Earl of Orkney from c.1106 to c.1130. Following his martyrdom an early 12th century well was thought to have been built in Birsay (thought to be below the present church), where miracles began to occur. After some 20 years his remains were exhumed and placed above the altar, then in Birsay and then in Kirkwall, prior to their final entombment in St Magnus Cathedral which was raised in his name.

The story of the Birsay
Known as The Birsay from the 18th century, the district in which the Brough and Palace are situated was the largest of the medieval ecclesiastical parishes in Orkney and home to St. Magnus the Martyr. Birsay, close to Birsay on its main road and the location of the first permanent religious seat of the Orkney diocese.

Place-name evidence suggests there was a minor farm (tū) and a small fort (lōggar), two architecturally sophisticated structures (one on the Brough and the other in Birsay) indicate that the Birsay had involved secular and ecclesiastical wealth and power in the 10th and early 11th centuries.

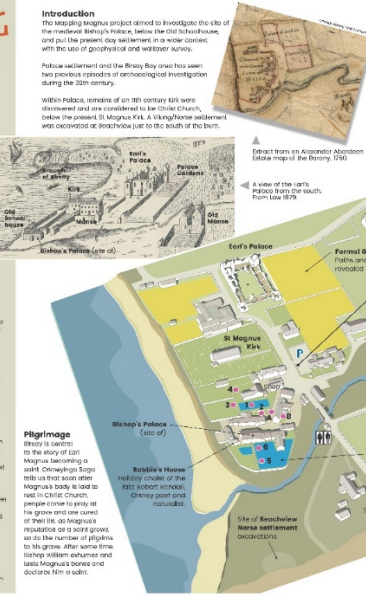
Birsay takes its status as principal seat of ecclesiastical power in the mid-thirteenth century through a series of events. It was an important centre in which Earl Robert II sought refuge and soon began building the palace, which still dominates the settlement today.

Introduction

The Mapping Magnus project aimed to investigate the site of the medieval Birsay Palace, below the Old Birsay House, and put the present-day settlement in a wider context, with the use of geophysical and walkover surveys.

Palace settlement and the Birsay Bay area has seen two previous episodes of archaeological investigation during the 20th century.

Within Palace, remains of an 18th century site were discovered and are considered to be the site of the church below the present St Magnus Kirk. A Viking/Horse settlement was excavated at Birsay just to the south of the town.



Traces in the walls

Traces from the medieval period of ashops and early residences are built into the fabric of the present settlement. Look around at the walls and houses and see if you can spot any red sandstone. Much of this is likely to have come from the Earl's Palace, as it is to disappear in the 18th century. But some finely moulded pieces around the Old Brough may have originated from the medieval Earl's Palace and church.

Another due to the 'Mrs Bell' stone, half of which is built into St Magnus Kirk, and the other into nearby Caithness. This is thought to originate from Bishop Adam Borthwick's residence in Birsay. (Based on documentary evidence), most likely the Bishop's Palace.

Excavations

Eight trenches were excavated within the residential gardens, marking the area thought to contain the medieval Bishop's Palace.

Excavations revealed that a layer of sand about 10cm deep covered the medieval settlement. This suggests there was a short period of abandonment of the settlement between the late medieval period, before the 18th century complex was built. It could also reflect the skill of archaeological and geophysical work that occurred when St Magnus was moved to Kirkwall in the first half of the 18th century or could indicate the transfer of ownership of the area from Earl to Church and the probable changes in administration and occupation that ensued.

Excavation 1
Trench 1 revealed a horse structure with a flagstone floor and stone wall. It was paved with mosaic containing animal and fish bones, shell and horse pottery.

Trenches 2 and 4
revealed a large in situ stone wall, which might connect to the form and structure of the Earl's Palace.

Trenches 3, 4, 5 and 8
contained wind-blown sand which revealed medieval structures and middens.

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Wider story
Sticking out into the Atlantic Ocean, the Point of Buckquoy epitomises the coastal maritime landscape so important to Birsay in its hinterland. The combination of eroded cliffs, in which to grow and protect oneself, and the richly named coastal topography identifying resources such as driftwood, seaweed, washed nets, fishing nets and sheltered landing places, indicate a worked land and sea scarp where every possible resource was identified and utilised.

In medieval times, one of the key sea routes through the Islands connecting Birsay to the rest of Orkney was the coast. It is likely that Birsay benefitted from passing trade and its strategic position as one of very few safe landing places on the north west coast of Orkney.

POINT OF BUCKQUOY WALKS

Point of Buckquoy boasts some remarkable sites, from **Widish and Norse settlements** to clusters of more recent **boat nouts**. It is the gateway to the extensive **Viking/Horse settlement** on the Brough of Birsay.

- 1 View point to Brough of Birsay
- 2 Eroding Norse settlement
- 3 Settlement mounds
- 4 Northside Manse Stones
- 5 Skibba (Skipp) Oeo Boat Nouts
- 6 Whole Bone
- 7 View of the Brough
- 8 Mans Well
- 9 Birsay Mill
- 10 Old Manse
- 11 Bridge
- 12 Bishop's Palace
- 13 Earl's Palace
- 14 St Magnus Church
- 15 Point of Buckquoy
- 16 Point of Buckquoy nouts
- 17 Site of Norse settlement
- 18 Site of Norse grave and settlement
- 19 Fur's Palace
- 20 Coastal erosion - sites and surveys
- 21 Manse Stones

Coastal erosion - sites and surveys
Open to the full force of the Atlantic Ocean, the Birsay coast suffers from high levels of coastal erosion in certain places, and numerous archaeological sites are being lost to the sea. Structures and middens were recorded during the Mapping Magnus project so the sites can be monitored.

Manse Stones
Along this exposed coast, the Manse stones that repeatedly mark the resting places of the coffin of Earl Magnus as he was carried from his to Birsay, are found curiously close together. Perhaps this is due to the increasing proximity to the end destination - 'Christ Church' or 'near the Brough' - every along the guided coast, did the sea blow and upon them, so that they had down their garden to land seawards into their 'hurry' (quote from Bessie Bell). Whichever the reason, both north through Northside, the coast and the road linking the houses, have related Manse stone locations, in memory of the veneration held for this martyred warrior earl who became the Orkney's Patron Saint.

Skibba (Skipp) Oeo nouts
Local lore says that the whole was washed ashore in Dornoch Bay just below the Palace c.1872. Woodcuts placed a vessel mounted on a large rock on the site.

Whole Bone
Local lore says that the whole was washed ashore in Dornoch Bay just below the Palace c.1872. Woodcuts placed a vessel mounted on a large rock on the site.

View of the Brough
Local lore says that the whole was washed ashore in Dornoch Bay just below the Palace c.1872. Woodcuts placed a vessel mounted on a large rock on the site.

Mans Well
Holy well associated with Magnus, closed for a while.

Birsay Mill
Opened in 1877.

Old Manse
Site of Old Manse (early 18th century, now demolished).

Bridge
The earliest bridge (built 1872) close to east side.

Bishop's Palace
(Site of)

Earl's Palace
Built in 1765 on 18th century foundations.

St Magnus Church
Built in 1765 on 18th century foundations.

Point of Buckquoy
Point of Buckquoy

Point of Buckquoy nouts
Nouts (or nouts/boathouses) are boat-shaped depressions or outcroppings, traditionally positioned just above the high water line used to protect small fishing boats during the winter months. They originated from the Viking and Norse periods in Orkney, but most are likely to be post-medieval, many were used until the 1850s.

2016

Poppies: Weeping Window



St Magnus Cathedral hosted 'Poppies: Weeping Window' by artist Paul Cummins and designer Tom Piper to mark the centenary of The Battle of Jutland. The presentation of Weeping Window was supported by Northlink Ferries and the learning and engagement programme for the Poppies: Wave and Weeping Window was supported by the Foyle Foundation.

