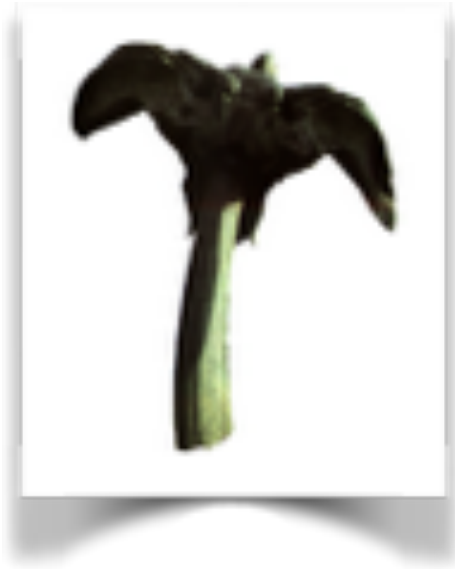


# Birsay HeritageTrust Newsletter

December 2015



# Mill News

Summer is over and autumn is well under way and we have had a successful harvest for the mill. The Hays brothers took care of the harvesting and the drying of the crop and delivered all 20 tonnes to the mill for storage. We cannot get 20ts in the container but we stored the rest in the mill ready for the first milling which has been carried out as our stocks from the 2013 harvest had run out.

As was stated at the AGM we had to increase our prices this year as the committee had some concern about our financial situation. Since then we have carried out a detailed cost analysis which indicates that while we are keeping our heads above water we are not making sufficient money to be able to transfer to our reserves. The committee will be taking a closer look at our costs and prices to try and come to a situation which satisfies the Trust but does not scare away our customers.

We are trying a new venture with our bere and that is to make malt for sale to the public. Once again we are fortunate in having the expertise of Rae Phillips on hand to guide us through the various stages of making malt. We have soaked, germinated and dried half a tonne of grain for this venture to test the market. We have had some enquiries about the malt so

hopefully it will be popular. See the attached photos showing the various stages of making the malt.

The mill has been inspected by Environmental health from the Council and was given a clean bill of health which does for three years. Brian had made sure that the mill was looking its best prior to the inspection. Some maintenance is due to be carried out by OIC on the mill in respect of the main doors and the west gable.

Once again we had an encouraging number of visitors to the mill over the summer months (3216) It was gratifying to see that the donations had increased considerable this year mainly than Tommy Matches making up a new donations box and re-positioning the box in a more obvious location.

We have cooperated with the Agronomy Institute of Orkney College in grinding a small quantity of black oats to enable some research to be carried out on the black oats.





## The Control Tower

Once again we played host to the Aberdeenshire Dowzers (<http://www.ba-events.com/ba-dowsing.htm>) in letting them set up their camp on the airfield. They are a very enthusiastic group and seem to enjoy their time in Orkney their visit in August was their second visit this year. William Shearer has been guiding them to areas known to have war-time remnants and this year were successful in salvaging a spitfire wing among other smaller items. They also re-instated the flag pole cairn and held a short service of remembrance during their visit.

We are indebted to Andy Saunders and Key Publishing for giving permission to repost an article from “Britain at War” magazine- the full article is linked in the BHT website. Here are photographs of a section of the recovered wing and the dowzers’ tent.



## Another Orkney Production Film Show in the Birsay Hall



We collaborated with Another Orkney Production (<http://www.scapaflo.org/about.htm>) in having a film show in the Birsay hall as part of the AOP Festival of Flight and had an open day at the control tower during the festival for people who were interested in seeing the inside of the building. Thanks to all who helped and to the ladies for providing refreshments at the hall and the control tower. Thanks also to William Shearer who had also dressed up the remains of the cinema with posters, mannequins in wartime garb and WW2 music which really brought the place back to life. Amazing what one can do with a little imagination.

## **Kitchener's Memorial**

Orkney Heritage Society was not successful in obtaining funding for the proposal to develop the memorial. Further discussions are taking place about what is possible with regards to the memorial.



## **Update on the Kitchener Memorial**

As a result of the public articles about the commemoration of the sinking of HMS Hampshire in June 1916 the project has

received a lot of useful and candid feedback on the proposals to better mark the loss at the Memorial. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who wrote, phoned, E-mailed, commented on Social Media and spoke to me.

There has been unanimous support for the need to mark the day up at the tower itself and also to safeguard the structure for future generations.

My initial ideas to open the tower to the public caused consternation in some circles and I am grateful that these concerns were aired. This allowed the options to be explored and the project team have now settled on a scheme that seems to meet the needs of most and fit within the wishes expressed.

Discussions with the Community Councils, planners, Royal British Legion, Royal Naval Association, relatives of those lost and locals have coalesced around the following proposal. A low wall is planned to be constructed approximately around the edge of the existing concrete apron. The wall will be of local stone to reflect the style of the tower. On the inner face of the wall; granite plaques will bear the names of the 737 men lost in HMS Hampshire. It is also proposed that the names of the others lost the following week on the Laurel Crown also be added.

The wall technically does not need planning permission, however given the views freely expressed on the project to date a planning application will be made. Further details will be in the paper.



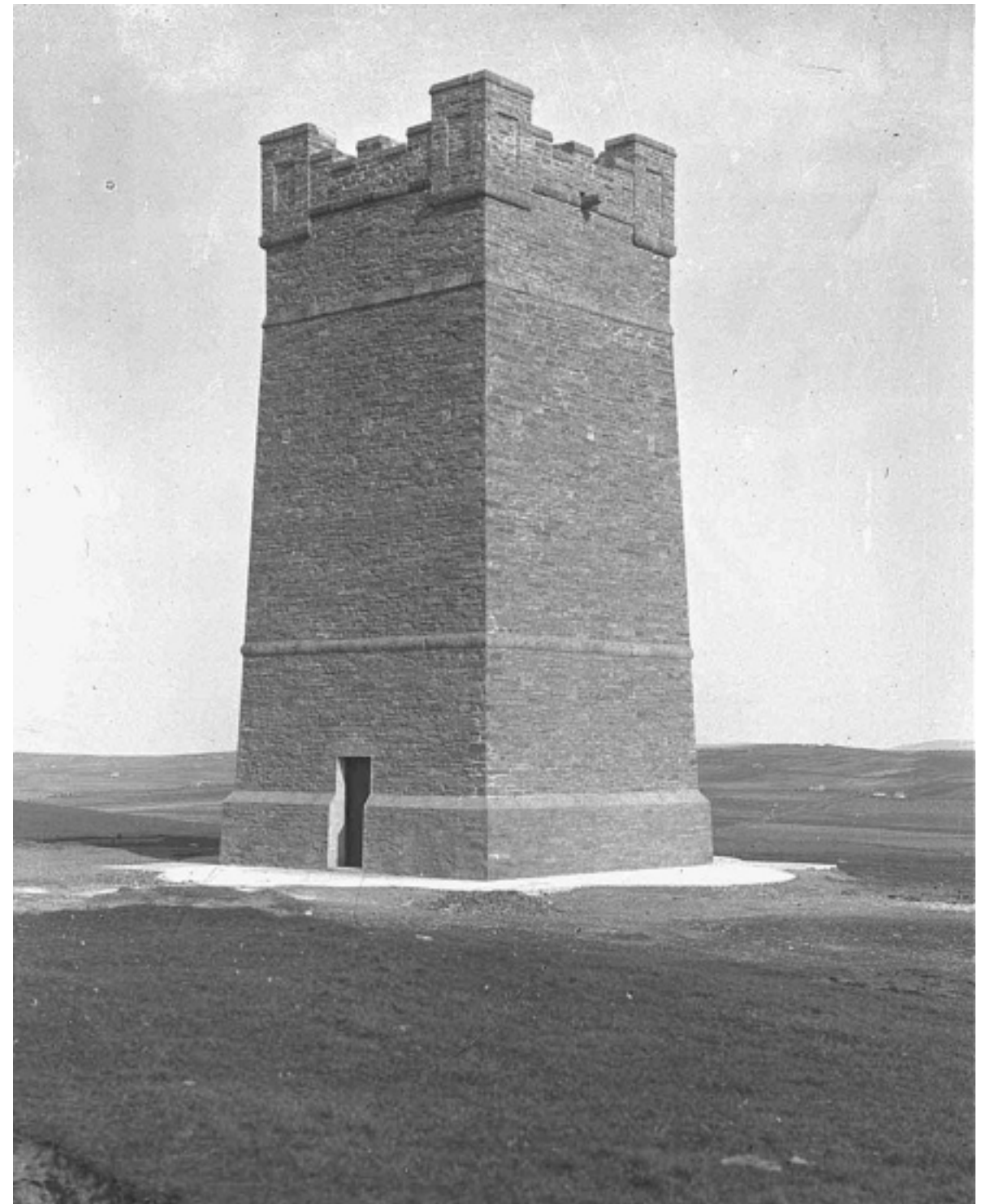
The tower itself will be restored to its original condition. For this to be achieved it will be necessary to access the inside of the hollow tower. However the re-formed doorway will be left locked and used for maintenance and inspection access only. It is worth noting that the majority of concern expressed about the work at the tower centred on the perceived risk of unauthorised access to the tower. This compromise of a secured maintenance access, as intended by the original design, should deal with the concerns expressed.

On the day itself (5th June 2016) a commemoration is to be undertaken up at the tower and the new memorial to those lost will be officially opened.

Already there have been several relatives of those lost who have asked for details of what is planned for the day as they wish to come and join in. Work needs to be done on this aspect urgently and volunteers would be welcomed!

So there is a lot to do in the coming 18 months. If you want to roll your sleeves up and join in then please get in touch.

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## **Development Officer.**

I am pleased to report that the Birsay Community has obtained grant money from HIE and OIC to enable the community to employ a development officer to take forward various initiatives in the parish. We are very fortunate that VAO has agreed to be the employer of the person and will carry out all the HR functions required by the post and second the person to the Birsay Community. We need to thank both Francesca Couperwhite (HIE), Claire Kemp (OIC) and Gail Anderson (VAO) for the work they have put in to obtain the funds for the post. BHT has a list which includes, among others

- promoting the sale of bere meal, thereby increasing the throughput at the mill,
- gathering the funding to refurbish the control tower and turn it into an interpretation centre for air activity in WW2 in Orkney.
- Improve the mill as a visitor attraction
- Investigate the potential for fitting a water turbine at the mill

The partners in the venture are

- Birsay Heritage Trust
- St Magnus Church (Birsay) Trust

- Birsay Community Council
- Birsay Agricultural Society
- Birsay Community Hall

An advert will be in the paper in November and we would hope to have the person in post for the start of 2015.

If any member has any suggestions to be explored by the development worker please get in touch and let us know.

## **Update:**

The Birsay Development worker has been appointed.

He will start in the post on 5 Jan. We would propose to have a steering group meeting sometime about 12-14 January so as he can start work on the Birsay Plan.