



# ODIN NEWS

Summer 2009

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**To promote the identification, categorisation and preservation of Orkney's defence heritage, to establish a Wartime Trail in collaboration with others and to raise awareness and understanding of the value of this archaeology and social history in all its aspects throughout the Orkney Islands.**

Welcome to the very first **Orkney Defence Interest Network (ODIN)** newsletter! We hope to produce more information on what we've been up to on a periodical basis in the future. If you have anything you'd like to see, please get in touch.

To get you up to date with things so far, below are a few quick Q&As.

### **Q: What has ODIN been up to since the public meeting in March?**

A: We've been very busy putting together an organisational committee, which has put together a mission statement (see left) as well as some Aims & Objectives, see below.

#### *Our aims & objectives:*

- Identify all relevant interest groups and establish an overall communication plan that will drive forward the common objective of protecting and promoting Orkney's wartime archaeology and social history.
- Ensure the recording of Orkney's defence heritage by all means e.g. oral, written, film and photographic, electronic, archaeological and safe storage and maintenance of that record.
- Following categorisation of sites, ensure the production of a plan for the establishment of a Wartime Trail that will interpret the role of Orkney in both World Wars.
- Identify and assist establishment of local groups for particular areas of interest to ODIN participants (eg airfields) and help integrate these with other interest groups.
- Promote interest in, and awareness of, Orkney's defence heritage amongst all sections of the Orkney community, including schools.
- To assist in the identification of potential funding streams for the preservation and/or restoration of wartime sites.

### **Q: So, what have you done so far to achieve these aims?**

A: Well, so far we've:

- arranged a training session for interested volunteers to help catalogue archaeological sites
- are shortly to organise a training session for those interested in carrying out oral history
- have had various discussions with BBC Radio Orkney about helping to produce an evening programme called "Orkney's War"
- had discussions with BBC Scotland about a piece for the BBC One programme *Landward*
- been approached by Living Orkney to write a piece for their magazine
- are in ongoing discussions with Orkney Museums & Heritage about the Royal Oak Memorial Garden, and
- had discussions with Orkney Museums & Heritage regarding a 2010 Orkney Museum exhibit "Orkney's War", undertaking a look at the impact of the tourism of war in the Channel Islands & other areas with wartime remains.

So, we've been working quite hard behind the scenes!

## **Q: Ok, so who's involved?**

A: After various meetings, it was agreed to have a small Executive Committee of six members, and a larger Area Group which would meet on an irregular basis. The Executive Committee consists of:

Our main point of contact: **Anne Billing**: [anne.billing@orkney.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:anne.billing@orkney.uhi.ac.uk), **01856 741360**

Responsibility: *Chair & Secretary*, Member of Friends of St Ninian's

**Lynn Campbell** (Treasurer), *responsible for Education*. Member of Orkney Heritage Society & Holm Heritage Group

**John Clarke**, *responsible for Funding*

**James Miller**, *responsible for Communication*

**Ken Hambly**, *responsible for Liaison*. Member of Holm Heritage Group & University of the Third Age

**Sandy Scarth**, *responsible for Project Coordination*. Member of Birsay Heritage Trust

## **What's Next?**

We are currently in the process of putting together a website which we hope will become a focus for those interested in the Defence Heritage of Orkney, pulling together other groups and organisations of similar interest to raise awareness and levels of interest.

In the long term we very much want to see Orkney's Defence Heritage having an impact on the tourist market, and making that heritage as valued as the more ancient remains and culture strands of Orkney's past. The survey we conducted during our public meeting in March raised some interesting issues. If we haven't been in touch with you directly yet, we hope to soon!

## **ODIN Events**

### **Active fieldwork & survey of wartime sites, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

*Gavin Lindsay, organiser of our very first training event, was very happy with the responses he received, despite the short notice. We hope to offer a few more of these on-the-ground training events. Gavin reports below.*

Well July was a very exciting month for ODIN as it witnessed the launch of the Fieldwork Division with the first survey and recording event. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, a team of 3 volunteers namely Eddy Ross, Ken Hambly and Mark Jenkins joined Archaeological Geophysicist and Surveyor Alistair Wilson and myself on the cliffs above Scapa Beach for a day of earthwork survey. The weather was kind to us with only a light wind, a very good thing when surveying near a 10m high sheer cliff face!

The venue for the fieldwork event was a small trench system located on a V-shaped promontory of cliff at the Western end of Scapa Beach in the Parish of St Ola. It is accessible via a public coastal footpath that meanders around the Northern edge of Scapa Flow between Scapa Bay and Waulkmill Bay. I first identified the site back in February of this year when I was out for a walk and came across

the distinctive square section cutting and dog-leg plan of a typical 20<sup>th</sup> century military trench. This site was previously unrecorded and unknown to the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) which catalogues all of Scotland's known archaeological sites. The trench is clearly shown on RAF aerial photographs that were taken on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1950 and suggest that the trench system used to be more extensive than it is now, the reduction being due to the effects of coastal erosion.

Aerial photographs offer a fantastic resource for researching wartime sites in Orkney and an extensive collection dating from as early as 1946 are available in the Orkney Sites and Monuments Record housed in Orkney College. These can be viewed by anyone who is interested by appointment with County Archaeologist Julie Gibson or you can contact me and I am more than happy to introduce you to the incredible resource.

The trench system is in a very interesting location, as my colleague Alistair pointed out, it offers an excellent elevated position for a machine gun (MG),

such as a Lewis or Vickers machine gun, from which enfilading fire could be directed onto Scapa Beach in the unlikely event of an invasion. This position is but one of a whole series of anti-invasion defences that were constructed in Orkney during the summer of 1940 when the threat of a German invasion was at its peak. The MG position marks the most westerly end of a line of defences that run between Scapa Bay and Inganess Bay. If you are interested in finding out more about Orkney's anti-invasion defences then I shall be taking a guided walk along the Scapa – Inganess line on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> of August as part of Orkney Archaeological Society's programme of walks. We are meeting at Scapa Beach car park at 13:30 and all are welcome. Those interested in attending should contact Nandra Thompson on **01856 850889**.

Prior to the ODIN fieldwork event, none of the volunteers had carried out a measured earthwork survey before, however after a short introduction and some basic tuition from Alistair, all three ODINeers were getting to grips with the engineers level, both setting it up and taking bearings. In addition to this, they tackled the tasks of identifying breaks of slope, measuring them with tapes and plotting all of the readings on a planning board to form a hachured scale drawing of the earthworks. The day was a marvellous success with a full plan of the surviving trench-works being completed. The record that this work has created can now go on to inform the Orkney Sites and Monuments Record and the NMRS as well as future archaeological research. A great time was had by all involved and the success of the event offers great hope and anticipation for the future. Mark Jenkins said "*I really enjoyed the day and it made me view our*

*landscape quite differently. In just one day I learnt a great deal about surveying and I hope I can put it to good use again.*"

Through training ODINeers such as Eddy, Ken and Mark in archaeological survey techniques, the foundation blocks are put in place for a Fieldwork Division composed of trained operatives. These individuals can then both share their expertise with others interested in taking part in field activities as well as carrying out further surveys on Orkney's wartime remains.

My thanks to Alistair, Eddy, Ken and Mark for their enthusiasm and commitment on the 11<sup>th</sup> and here's to many more fieldwork events in the future. Anyone interested in getting involved please get in touch and watch this space!

**Gavin J Lindsay**

**ODIN Fieldwork Coordinator**

**E-mail: [Gavin.lindsay@orkney.uhi.ac.uk](mailto:Gavin.lindsay@orkney.uhi.ac.uk)**

(if you don't have access to email, phone Anne Billing on **741360**)



### **Oral History Training, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

Several folk expressed an interest in taking part in some oral history on ODIN's behalf. A training event will be organised on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October by Lynn Campbell and Sue Barnard (venue/time to be confirmed). If you'd like to learn more on how to

go about this valuable, rewarding and interesting piece of work then come along. Get in touch with Lynn on [tunguska@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:tunguska@tiscali.co.uk) (771391) to register interest or ask questions.

### **Glossary**

Do you know the difference between a WRAF and a WRNS? Do you know your Ack Ack from your Battery? Well, we hope to pull together a Glossary (idiot's guide?) of terms, starting below, though space restrictions mean we can only add a few in this newsletter. If you see any errors, or if there are any glaring

omissions, please get in touch. We'd like to eventually have a fairly comprehensive list of commonly used terms, acronyms and abbreviations.

**Ack Ack** : Term used to describe anti-aircraft fire

**Amiens Hut** : Temporary structure of canvas on a frame used at British base camps

**Armlet** : Cloth band worn round the arm to identify a particular duty or function

**Bantam** : Term for members of battalions between 5ft 1in and 5ft 4in

**Battery** : A group of six guns or howitzers

**Black Hand Gang** : Slang for a raiding party on a difficult mission

**Blighty One** : A wound bad enough for a soldier to be sent back to Britain

**Bully Beef** : Canned corned beef that was the principal protein ration of the British Army

**Chain Home** : The codename for the ring of coastal radar stations built by the British before and during World War II, providing long range detection.

**Chain Home Low** : The Chain Home Low stations were shorter-ranged but could detect aircraft flying at lower levels.

**Communication Trench** : Narrow trench constructed at an angle to a defensive trench to permit concealed access to the trench

**Conscription** : In January 1916, Parliament passed the first conscription laws (compulsory enrolment) ever passed in Britain. At first only single men and childless widowers aged 18 to 41 were called up. By 1918 compulsory service had been extended to include all men aged 18 to 51. More than 2.3 million conscripts were enlisted before the end of the war in November, 1918

**Daisy Cutter** : A shell with impact fuse to explode immediately on touching ground.

**Dixie** : British Army camp kettle

**Duck-Board** : Slatted wooden planking used for flooring trenches or muddy ground

**Dud** : A shell that failed to explode

**Dugout** : Shelter made in the wall of a trench, varying from a small area that could only accommodate one man (cubby hole), to a deep dugout, ten or more feet underground

**Dum-Dum** : A soft-nosed bullet which expanded hitting causing a terrible wound

**Flak** : Term used to describe anti-aircraft fire

**Iron Ration** : Emergency ration of corned beef, tea, sugar and biscuit. Carried by all soldiers in case cut off from normal food supplies

**Kitchener's Army** : Men recruited into the British Army a result of Lord Kitchener's appeal for volunteers

**Kite Balloon** : Observation balloon controlled by a cable from the ground

**Listening Post** : Advanced post, usually in no-man's land, where soldiers tried to find out information about the enemy

**No Man's Land** : The territory between the two front lines

**Over the Top** : To leave the front trench and attack the enemy

**Pals Battalion** : Soldiers raised in the same locality with the promise they would serve with their friends

**Parapet** : The side of the trench facing the enemy

**Pillbox** : Reinforced concrete machine-gun post

**Respirator** : Gas mask in which air was inhaled through a metal box of chemicals

**RFC** : Royal Flying Corps. It became the RAF on 1st April 1918

**Runner** : Soldier who carried messages by hand

**Shell-Shock** : Psychological disorder caused by prolonged exposure to combat.

**Tommy** : Slang term for British soldier

**Trench Foot** : Fungal infection of the foot which could become gangrenous, caused by exposure to wet and cold

**VAD** : Voluntary Aid Detachment

**WAAC** : Women's Auxiliary Army Corps

**WRAF** : Women's Royal Air Force

**WRNS** : Women's Royal Naval Service