

The Shapinsay Sound



LOCAL

The newsletter for the island of Shapinsay produced by the Shapinsay Development Trust.
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We had a busy end of term, with lots going on.

The older children had a great time in Hoy, enjoying coasteering, canoeing, gorge walking and archery. They also saw the Dwarfie Stane and spent two nights away from home.

You can see some photos and videos from the trip on the school website on the **P4-7** page. Many thanks to Graham for coming along with us! While the rest of the children were in Hoy, Gavin went to Lagganlia with other P7s from Hope, St Andrews and Rousay schools. He also had a great time, and was a credit to Shapinsay School.

Many thanks to Parent Council, the Shapinsay Development Trust and the Shapinsay Community Council for helping to fund the trips.

We all went on a walk around the Balfour Castle woods in the last week of term, and it was a really nice afternoon for a walk. The children (with the help of Miss Angier) were able to use plant keys to identify the plants we saw. Thanks to the parents who came along to join us for the walk, and to Balfour Castle for letting us walk round the grounds.

The end of term also saw our end of year Leavers Assembly where P1 -3 performed their St Magnus play, P4 -7 demonstrated counting in Japanese and we said goodbye to Mrs Duncan (who sadly won't be teaching fiddle here next session, but we will have another fiddle teacher instead) and to the Primary 7s.

We have a tradition in Shapinsay School of soaking the P7s before they leave us. After a lot of double bluffing and subterfuge the staff and parents soaked the 4 P7 children when they were least expecting it. The children took it in good spirits and the rest of the children enjoyed watching! We hope that the P7s have a great time at KGS, we are sure that they will.

Term starts again for children on Tuesday 22nd August.



SHAPINSAY
DEVELOPMENT
TRUST

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Shapinsay Development Trust

August 2017

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Just a quick update to let you know: -

Sheila Garson has resigned from the board of directors of SDT and we would like to thank Sheila for all the hard work she has put in over her time on the board.

We have now appointed some new directors to the board.

Nic Thake no longer works for the Trust.

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Shapinsay Development Trust



SHAPINSAY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

YOUR BOARD NEEDS YOU

Due to recent events, the board needs to encourage more members to become directors of the trust to enable the services offered to continue.

We require new directors to enable the board to continue the essential services of the Electric Car, Mini Bus and Out of Hours Boat as well as other on-going projects.

We are planning on holding our AGM 23rd August 2017 in the Clubrooms at 7.30pm

So please ensure you are a member of the trust, so you can vote at the AGM and join the board should you wish.

Please contact The Boathouse on 711733 or boathouse@shapinsay.org.uk if you are interested in joining or download an application form at

<http://www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/SHAPINSAY/library.asp>



Keep calm with Mindfulness – free Shapinsay taster



The Blide Trust has invited Mindfulness Teacher Simon Tarry to give a free introduction to useful techniques to help folks relax. The event will be held at the Boathouse on Thursday August the 17th from 1.30 pm.

According to Simon, a registered Mental Health Nurse with over 20 years' experience, Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to and seeing clearly what is happening in our lives.

Although it will not eliminate life's pressures, Simon believes it can help us respond to them in a calmer manner that benefits our heart, head and body. It is also said to be helpful for people experiencing depression and anxiety.

Comments from previous participants in his mindfulness sessions for Blide say, "I've found mindfulness to be relaxing, very informative, surprising in a good way. Simon is good at explaining the details of mind and thought" and "Simon's voice helps me to relax – I feel a lot calmer and more relaxed after a session".

Earlier in the day the Blide Trust are running a free needle felting workshop between 10.30 am and 12.30, also at the Boathouse, with the opportunity to create an A5 or A4 sized picture to take home.

There will be a free lunch at 12.30 before the Mindfulness session and folks are welcome to come along to either or both events.

RNLI



Shapinsay Lifeboat Guild Barbecue & Fete - Around Shapinsay Yacht Race

Also this year the Yacht Club hope to have a Dinghy/ Catamaran Race from Kirkwall to Shapinsay

Saturday 26th August 3pm until late

Fancy Dress Floats and Individuals - theme "The Sea" Floats will meet in the Gatehouse Square 3pm and parade with the Stromness Pipe Band to the Playing Field

Any groups who would like to have a stall to raise funds for their own clubs are welcome

Live Music

Bar

Quoits - Names in by 3.30pm Men, Women and Children

More details in shop and on Facebook nearer the time

Garden Notes from Old School

This time of year, July into August, is a difficult time for garden lovers. The early flowers are starting to tail off and there seems to be a disproportionate amount of foliage in comparison which sprawls and collapses as soon as we get a wet day. There is a lull before the next wave of autumn flowers bursts onto the scene.

We have been having a glorious summer this year and this has resulted in some plants flowering earlier than usual. Dahlias have been in full flower for a good three weeks now. Did I start them off earlier than usual? – I'm quite sure I didn't!

Plants that enjoy sun and good drainage have really benefitted from the warm, dry weather we've had recently. Thyme 'Silver Queen' is loving its spot between the paving where it enjoys the heat stored in the stone later in the day and its pinky purple flowers are a magnet for bees.



Linaria 'Canon Went' has needed staking but not so tightly as to deny the graceful movement of its elegant soft pink spires. It is a relative of the purple linarias which grow wild in Southern Europe and has really enjoyed our sunny summer. The name of this plant has always intrigued me; I had mental images of a canon firing across the bay but it is actually named after a very well-respected Headmaster of a boys' school in Leicester, James Went, who on his retirement in 1919, was made an Honorary Canon of Leicester Cathedral, thus Canon Went.

Another plant that has excelled this year is Anthemist 'Sauce Hollandaise'. It has fine, feathery blue/green foliage which then becomes completely smothered in pale creamy daisy flowers with a yellow centre. The display will last for weeks if the dead flowers are removed; a plant that just keeps on going!



The catmints too are flowering wonderfully well: Nepeta 'Walker's Low' can always be relied on to put on a good show, making an arching mound that drapes over the edge of the steps. N. parnassica is much taller at about three feet and doesn't like to be crowded by other plants but is a lovely dark blue rising above the frothy lime green of the Lady's Mantle next door. N. 'Blue Dragon' was only planted last autumn so this is its first year flowering and it certainly is impressive! The flowers are huge and a very dark blue with the much darker purple calyxes that are common to all catmints. It seems to be a very strong grower, to the extent that it may need to be held in check so as not to go beyond its allotted space but that's a trait I can easily live with! In contrast to this is the dainty N. 'Dawn to Dusk' with delicate pale pink flowers and darker plum coloured calyxes.

I am so pleased with my new Keder greenhouse! I can't believe how quickly things have grown inside after just a few weeks. Under its protection I have just sown a few rows of fast maturing lettuce, radish, salad onions and Bull's Beet for salad leaves. Everything is going to be an experiment to see how long I can prolong the growing season this year and then how soon I can start again next year. Exciting times ahead!

Outside, the peas and beans have taken a bit of a bashing by the wind but amazingly, they still seem to want to produce. Mangetout peas are so sweet eaten straight off the plant but the variety of broad bean 'Stereo' has been outstanding. This produces a smallish bean which can be left and eaten in the traditional way but the pods are so tender with not much fluff inside so that they can be eaten whole. Definitely one to grow again next year.

If you have any garden tips that you would like to share or any special plants that you would like to tell others about please let me know and I will include them next month. Karen Evans, Old School, Shapinsay

karen@evanssmallholder.plus.com



All kinds of oral history welcome!



Jim Pratt of Heliar View is one of the latest folks to do some recordings for the 'Shapinsay Speaks' oral history project. Jim has been writing a number of poems in the Orcadian dialect about his memories of Shapinsay and he has been reading them onto our digital recorder so others can enjoy them too.

Subject matter ranges from the old Iona boat to the great hurricane of 1952 as well as poems about Jim's working life which started on the farm at Walthness and later continued at Strathore after which he helped his brother-in-law Ian Gray with building work on the island.

Jim's passion for music over the years is well known. He learnt the guitar as a youngster and has composed many of his own tunes and played in the Shapinsay Band from the middle of the 1960's, later becoming part of the Shapinsay Music Group, which he still practices

and plays with today. He never felt drawn to take up the fiddle though after his early efforts were described as sounding "like a dying cat". But his poetry is certainly hitting the right note with the 'Shapinsay Speaks' project!

There have been other writers in Jim's family so putting pen to paper in this way is very much carrying on a family tradition. His relative Willie Groat had some of his poems included in the classic 'Isle of Shapinsay' book by William Irvine in 1977. We're delighted to share here with you just one of Jim's pieces of work which he's recorded for us, recalling his boyhood days on our island.

WHIN WE WIR YOUNG

LYING ON WIR BACKS LUKKAN UP TAE THE SKY
STARING AT CLOUDS AWAY UP HIGH
WATCHING THE BURDS AS THEY FLEW BY
LARKS IN THE MORNING SINGAN.....

TRYAN TAE SEE THEM WIS HARD TAE DO
BUT AT TIMES WE WIR LUCKY TAE SEE A FEW
AND ITHUR BURDS WE SAW THEM TOO
ROOND AND ABOUT THEY WID GO.....

THERE WIS BURDS THAT DID FLY BY
SWANS, DUCKS AND WHAPS UP HIGH
TEE'OS AND TERNS THAT WID HIV A TRY
TAE DIVE ON YER HEID TAE SCARE YE.....

THERE WIS A MARSHY PLACE DOON NEAR THE SHORE
WHAR BIRDS WERE NESTAN BY THE SCORE
DIFFERENT KINDS, A DIZAN OR MORE
ALL GATHERED TEGITHER.....

IN THE CORNER O THE LOCH THERE WIR SEGS
WHAR A WATERHEN DID LAY HER EGGS
HER CHICKS WIR BLACK WI REED EYES AND NEBS
BOY, THEY COULD FAIRLY GO.....

FAITHER SAID IF HER NEST WIS LOW, THE SPRING'LL BE DRY
BUT IF IT WAS GAN TAE BE WEET IN SPRING, IT'LL BE HIGH
WIR ELDERS HAD SEEN THIS KIND O THING IN DAYS GONE BY
SAYINGS FAE LONG AGO WIR AFTEN TRUE.....

IN ANITHER PLACE WHAR THE LINTY'S BIDE
IT'S NO VERY BIG AND NO THAT WIDE
IN THE BIG TUSSOCKS O GRESS THEY HIDE
IN THEIR NESTS WI EGGS SO BLUE.

Anyone who has any interesting poems, a diary or journals about days gone by on the island is welcome to read out and record some of them in the same way. Or you can be interviewed by a person of your choice on any topic you like about our island by anyone you know who would like to be involved. Tel: 711733 to find out more or email cao@shapinsay.org.uk

There will be a free training session with Professor Donna Heddle for anyone interested in volunteering as an interviewer for the 'Shapinsay Speaks' oral history project. This will take place between 10.30 am and 12.30 at the Boathouse on Friday August the 18th.

ELWICK BOOKWRIGHTS

The first meeting of the new fortnightly writing group, Elwick Bookwrights, took place on Saturday, 1st July, in the Boathouse. It was opened by Sheila Garson, who highlighted Shapinsay's literary heritage, dominated by Bessie Skea ("Countrywoman") and her father, John Skea, the poet.

Attendees (pictured) came from Shapinsay and the Mainland. The group members are interested in a broad range of writing categories, but there is a clear preference for short stories, poetry and novels, in that order. So we'll focus on examining techniques and devices useful for these, with this year's George Mackay Brown Fellowship Short Story Competition in mind.

Members prepare for each meeting when a set main topic, such as characterisation or setting, is discussed, with sharing of ideas and examples. A subsidiary topic has a related exercise to be done at home. The first exercise set was to use the power of writing to make a difference. Members whose letters were published in *The Orcadian* in July gained writing experience and confidence. Another July exercise was to create written sketches that could be crafted into two-line poems.

The Elwick Bookwrights will meet at 10.15 am on Saturday, 12th August, at the Boathouse, when the group will look at plot and at tools for building poetry.

There's a £1 charge per meeting (but the first meeting is free for new members) – this is to enable the group to cover expenses for guest speakers.

Kate Fereday Eshete
Organiser



Attending the first meeting - from left to right (front) Sheila Garson, Kate Fereday Eshete (back) Val Ashworth More, Louise Hollinrake, Pat Hazzledine, Brynna Bailey, Jim Pratt, Babs Stevenson, Mary Horgan, Michael Bell.

Shapinsay Wildlife Matters

by Paul Hollinrake

Rare Grass found on Shapinsay Quaking Grass *Briza media*.



Well there's a lot of grass on Shapinsay, and many species of this wonderful life giving plant, that we probably all take for granted. We certainly would not be able to enjoy the Sunday roast if there was no grass!

A local botanist John Crossley found an old record of a very rare grass existing on Shapinsay 40 years ago. The species is called Quaking Grass. It is not rare in Britain but there are known to be only three sites in Orkney and one of these is on Shapinsay. Last year John and I had a look near the Society School House up the north end, the site of the old record, but could not find it. This year John looked more closely and found it growing in abundance along both road verges there amongst numerous other species.



Quaking Grass blowing in the wind at the Society School Shapinsay, Paul Hollinrake.



Quaking Grass spikelets at Society School, Sheila Garson

Quaking Grass is one of our most attractive and easily recognised wild grasses on account of its delicate branched head of trembling or 'quaking' spikelets which are greenish yellow, often with a sheen and tinged purple. It is a perennial and grows up to a height of 50cm. It is delicate and spindly so diligent searching amongst the other grasses is required to find it.



Maggie Scollie's with Melancholy Thistle blooms, Paul Hollinrake

Sheila Garson knew about the Quaking Grass from her Grandmother Sheila Mainland, who went to the North School just across the road from the Society School in the 1920s. So Quaking Grass has probably grown there for at least 100 years. The rough land round the house would have been the teachers living for a few sheep and maybe a cow. It has not been cultivated post squaring, ie before 1850s, and this may be why the quaking grass has survived for so long, as it requires low fertility unimproved species rich ground.

Venezuela Cottage is another very new name for this very old property, probably coined by Triky Man who was the last to live there. It's really the Society School and was a school as far back as 1841 or earlier when David Hepburn was head teacher. He died there in 1913 aged 99. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge had a number of schools throughout Orkney and contributed to the high level of literacy here. It is still known locally as Maggie Scollie's house, she lived there up until 1976.

Sheila and her Mum Wilma Brown also knew of another location on Shapinsay where Quaking Grass grew at Crossgates where they lived 40 years ago. Unfortunately none of us can find it there now.

Quaking grass has many colloquial names such as dithering grass, shaking grass, tottergrass and shakers and quakers. No wonder both Sheila and I found it very difficult to photograph!

Many thanks to both Sheila and Wilma for photos and help with information for this article.